EMBODIED PARTICIPATION AND INTERACTIONAL COMPETENCE IN THE L2 CLASSROOM

PARTICIPACIÓN ENCARNADA Y COMPETENCIA INTERACTIVA EN EL AULA DE SEGUNDAS LENGUAS

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With Dell Hymes' model of communicative competence, it has been recognized how language use can be different from the decontextualized and perfect grammatical knowledge defended by Noam Chomsky. Such revolutionary perspective gave rise to communicative approaches in L2[1] pedagogy which aimed at fostering communication and interaction in the language classroom by engaging learners in real-life communication in the target language in order to provide them with more opportunities to develop their language skills.

More recently, current trends within sociocultural research on SLA inspired by Lave & Wenger's (1991) model of 'situated learning' reconceptualise language learning

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[1] In this document the term *second language* embraces *second* and *foreign* language teaching and learning.

in both informal and institutional contexts as resulting in learners' increasing participation in discursive and interactive practices of a community that they belong to through the very process of taking part in these (see, e.g., Hall, 1993; 1995; Hellermann, 2008; Mondada & Pekarek Doehler, 2004; Young & Miller, 2004), thus effectively developing their interactional competence (Hall, Hellermann & Pekarek Doehler, 2011; Pekarek Doehler, 2010).

It can be stated hence that the notion of *participation* in social interactions in L2 represents a major issue for SLA research and practice. However, participation in the language classroom is often conceived – by researchers as well as practitioners – in terms of verbal production and its quality. This results in a binary distinction between 'active verbal' participation and 'passive silent' non-participation, the former being the expected and successful way of learning and a clear indicator of learning outcomes. However, how can we describe – and evaluate – interactional competence in the L2 of those learners who remain silent or appear to be less 'active'?

Studies carried out within the framework of Conversation Analysis on everyday conversations, and namely work done by Charles Goodwin (e.g., Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004), found out that participation is a more complex phenomenon. It does not limit itself to talk only but rather embraces as well non-verbal conducts (gaze, face expression, body posture, gesture, handling of material objects, etc.) in the organization of social interactions and in the management of mutual actions. These ideas have been coined as 'embodied participation' (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004).

Within research on interaction in the educational context, recent studies (e.g. Koole, 2007; Sahlström, 2002) have also paid particular attention to non-verbal conducts in the organization of classroom participation. They argue that learners usually *display* or publicly account for participation or non-participation in classroom activities in several ways. For example, the former is demonstrated through raising hand to ask for a turn or establishing mutual gaze, while the latter - by engaging (implicitly or explicitly) in another activity which makes one being unavailable for the current one (e.g. looking outside through the classroom window, talking to the neighbour, reading the textbook or writing something down in the notebook).

The present paper is a first attempt to explore and describe learners' varied ways of participating in L2 classroom activities, with a specific focus on 'passive' ones.

Drawing on the analysis of empirical classroom data we will discuss what sort of interactional competence in L2 these learners display and how. This empirical research examines two sets of data from a larger corpus of videorecorded and finely transcribed classroom interactions[2]. The datasets come from two different educational and linguistic settings: a CLIL classroom (Science in English) in bilingual Catalan-Spanish Barcelona, Spain, and a regular L2 classroom (French as FL) in German-speaking Basel, Switzerland. They also represent different classroom activities: a teacher-led whole class activity and small-group work. Using the conversation analytic framework, we carry out micro-sequential and multimodal description of the participants' conducts.

The analysis reveals different resources by which L2 learners align their actions to on-going pedagogical activities: timing (e.g., taking the turn at the right moment, gazing at the relevant object, etc.), sequencing (providing an answer to a question, disagreeing with a previous statement, etc.) or topical adequacy. Basing on the findings, we identify recurrent patterns of participation across the two datasets, in spite of the differences between the communicative contexts. These patterns deconstruct the binary distinction between verbal 'participation' and 'non-participation' and indicate the existence of a number of more subtle ways of participating which include aspects such as listenership, attentiveness, coordination and engagement. Such subtle ways of participating emerge as a result of interconnections between *public displays of (non-)participation* to a current activity through the demonstration of (lack of) attentiveness and (non-)availability, on one hand, and indicators of *actual (lack of) alignment* with this activity through being in fact attentive and available to what is going on, on the other hand.

With these preliminary results, we hope to contribute to a better understanding of what it means to participate in L2 classroom activities by identifying the range of multimodal resources put to work by learners in order to demonstrate their attention to, understanding of and availability to the current pedagogical activity and by portraying a

more subtle but more precise picture of the L2 learners' interactional competence. The paper highlights the importance of enlarging our conception of participation by bringing in non-verbal and sequential aspects of social action when looking at the L2 classroom practices. Moreover, it calls for a revision of what features should be taken as indicators for evaluating the L2 learners' competence, beyond the mere quantity and quality (e.g., linguistic accuracy, fluency) of their verbal production.

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