An Exploration of the Relationship between Pedagogy and Interaction: the case of the missing ‘no’.

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This article attempts an exploration of the relationship between pedagogy and interaction by means of the analysis of numerous extracts from L2 classroom lessons using a Conversation Analysis (CA) methodology. The particular case examined involves the preference organisation of repair in form and accuracy contexts. It is suggested that, in general, pedagogical recommendations tend to assume that the L2 classroom does not have an interactional structure of its own. It is argued that, in this particular case, the pedagogical message works in direct opposition to the interactional message. The article concludes that the relationship between pedagogy and interaction is necessarily a reflexive one, and that it would be preferable for pedagogical recommendations to work in harmony with the interactional organisation of the L2 classroom, rather than in opposition to it.

\footnote{The study derives from my D Phil thesis, presented to the University of York in 1996. I am indebted to the following people for comments on the study: Paul Drew, Antony Peck, Keith Richards and David Westagate, as well as to two anonymous Language Learning reviewers. Correspondence concerning this article may be addressed to Paul Seedhouse, Norwegian Study Centre, University of York, York YO1 5EA, England. Internet: pks3@york.ac.uk.}
**Introduction**

A basic finding of discourse and communication studies is that human interaction is structurally organised. However, pedagogical recommendations for the L2 classroom rarely take into account in an explicit or methodical way the interactional structure of the setting within which the pedagogical activity is designed to take place. In Breen’s (1989) terms, pedagogical recommendations are expressed in terms of a task-as-workplan, and it is generally assumed that this can translate directly into a task-in-process as if there were no intervening level of organisation, i.e. as if the L2 classroom did not have its own interactional structure. It is still also rare for writers on L2 classroom pedagogy to provide interactional data, in the form of recordings or transcripts of their recordings, concerning the interactional consequences of their pedagogical recommendations. In other words, there is a lack of evidence concerning the task-in-process which results from the task-as-workplan. As a result, it may sometimes happen that pedagogy and interactional structure pull in different directions. This article illustrates the problem by investigating a case in which pedagogy and interaction appear to work in direct opposition to each other. That is, the pedagogical message works in direct opposition to the interactional message. The particular case involves the preference organisation of repair in form and accuracy contexts in the L2 classroom. The study adopts a Conversation Analysis (CA) methodology and starts by introducing the CA terms and concepts used in this study.

**Repair**

Repair may be defined as the treatment of trouble occurring in interactive language use. Van Lier (1988, 183) points out that repair is a generic term, with correction or error replacement being one kind of repair. CA studies of the organisation of repair in conversation date back to Schegloff,
Jefferson and Sacks (1977), whilst McHoul (1990) has studied the organisation of repair in L1 classrooms. A variable approach to repair in the L2 classroom has been suggested by Van Lier (1988) and Kasper (1986). Van Lier suggests (1988, pp. 188-9) that there are four basic kinds of repair in the L2 classroom, namely didactic repair, conversational repair, conjunctive repair and disjunctive repair. Van Lier concludes his chapter on repair by suggesting that “… we must bear in mind that certain types of activity naturally lead to certain types of repair, and that therefore the issue of how to repair is closely related to the context of what is being done.” (Van Lier, 1988, p. 211). Kasper (1986, p. 39) contrasts the organisation of repair in ‘language centred’ and ‘content centred’ phases of L2 lessons and concludes that:

“…talking about repair in FL teaching as such is inconclusive: rather, preferences and dispreferences for specific repair patterns depend on the configuration of relevant factors in the classroom context.…… the teaching goal of the two phases turned out to be the decisive factor for the selection of repair patterns.”

In line with Van Lier and Kasper, this article adopts a variable, context-based approach to repair organisation in the L2 classroom.

Repair trajectories are the routes by which repair is accomplished. It is important to distinguish self-initiated repair (I prompt repair of my mistake) from other-initiated repair (somebody else notices my mistake and prompts repair). Self-repair (I correct myself) must also be distinguished from other-repair (somebody corrects my mistake). This means that there are normally four possibilities:

*self-initiated self-repair*, as in the example below;

Extract 1
N: She was giving me all the people that were gone this year. I mean this quarter

(Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks, 1977, p. 364)

*self-initiated other-repair*, as in the example below;

Extract 2

B: He had dis uh Mistuh W.. Whatever k.. I can’t think of his first name, Watts on, the one that wrote that piece,

A: Dan Watts.

(Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks, 1977, p. 364)

*other-initiated self-repair*, as in the example below;

Extract 3

B: hhh Well I’m working through the Amfat Corporation.

A: The who?

B: Amfah Corporation

(Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks, 1977, p. 368)

*other-initiated other-repair*, as in the example below.
However, these four possibilities are not equivalent or interchangeable, since there are preference organisations associated with them.

**Preference Organisation**

CA research has shown that alternative actions (e.g. acceptances and rejections of invitations) are routinely performed in different ways (Drew, 1994). Basically, preferred actions are generally produced without hesitation or delay, are direct and unmitigated. Dispreferred actions are generally prefaced by delay and characterised by indirectness, hesitation and mitigation. Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (1977) have outlined the preference organisation of repair in conversation. In conversation, according to Levinson (1983, p. 341), there is an order of preference with respect to repair trajectories as follows: most preferred is self-initiated self-repair, then self-initiated other-repair, then other-initiated self-repair, then other-initiated other-repair. In the extract below we see how this works in practice, with the interactants working their way down the preference ranking:

**Extract 5**
1  L:    But y’know single beds’r awfully thin to sleep on.
2  S:    What?
3  L:    Single beds. //They’re
4  E:    Y’mean narrow?
5  L:    They’re awfully narrow yeah.

(Levinson, 1983, p. 342)

The repairable item here is ‘thin’ in line 1, which S and E analyse as being inappropriate in this context. In line 4 we see E proposing a more acceptable lexical item, and in line 5 L accepts the validity of the repair. As L does not initiate self-repair or other-repair in his/her own turn or transition space in line 1, the listeners (S and E) go down the ranking of preference to the next option, which is other-initiated self-repair: the other-initiation is conducted by S in line 2, and the self-repair is conducted by L in line 3. However, L clearly has not located the source of the trouble in his/her second turn (in line 3). This is evident in that L repeats ‘single beds’ and then starts to repeat the remainder of his/her utterance. As a consequence, the listeners can move down the ranking scale to other-initiated other-repair in line 4. Although other-initiated other-repair is heavily dispreferred in conversation as a first turn after trouble, its use in this case (combined with interruption) is mitigated by virtue of its sequential location in the above extract. Given that the listeners here have given multiple opportunities for self-repair, they are justified in interrupting and using other-initiated other-repair. The interactional evidence is that L does not take offence at its use, in that L performs a move of agreement and repetition of the repaired item. So we can see that, as Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (1977, p. 369) put it: “If more than one other-initiated sequence is needed, the other-initiators are used in order of increasing strength.”
Database

This study is based on a database of L2 lessons and extracts from L2 lessons. Most database items consist of written transcripts of lesson, although there are some untranscribed video and audio sources as well. Some items come from published sources such as articles in journals and books on the L2 classroom; some come from unpublished sources such as Masters or PhD theses. The data total approximately 330 lessons or fragments of lessons, of hugely varying length from 11 different countries and represent the teaching of 6 different L2s. There is great variety in terms of the type of institution, type of class, level of learners’ proficiency in L2, culture, country of origin and age of learners covered in this database. A more detailed description of the database and discussion of issues relating to the database are provided in the Appendix.

Contexts

The idea that there are various different varieties of communication which can occur in the L2 classroom and which can be called ‘contexts’ or ‘activity types’ or ‘interaction types’ has been proposed by Ellis (1984), Tsui (1987), Van Lier (1988), Hasan (1988) and Abdesslem (1993). This article deals solely with ‘form and accuracy’ contexts (Seedhouse, 1994; Seedhouse, 1996a), in which the focus is on linguistic form and accuracy: personal or ‘real-world’ meanings tend not to enter into the picture. Typically in this context the teacher’s pedagogical purposes will aim at the production of a specific string of linguistic forms by the learners, and the learners produce utterances for the teacher to evaluate. Presentation and practice are normally involved: the learners will learn from the teacher how
to manipulate linguistic forms accurately. This context is instantly recognisable as the ‘classic’ L2 classroom context, and the extracts cited below are taken from many different kinds of classroom around the world.

The major feature of the organisation of repair in this context is the very tight connection between the linguistic forms and patterns of interaction which the learners produce in the L2 and the pedagogical purposes which the teacher introduces. The focus of the repair is on the production of specific sequences of linguistic forms. Repair may be initiated by the teacher if the linguistic forms and patterns of interaction produced are not exactly identical to those targeted by the teacher’s pedagogical purposes, even if the learners produce utterances which are linguistically correct and appropriate, as in the extract below. From the evidence of the database, repair of linguistically correct and appropriate utterances seems to be peculiar to form and accuracy contexts within the L2 classroom.

Extract 6

T:  *Wohin ist Susan gefahren?* ((tr: Where has Susan gone to?)) Michelle.

L:  *Sie ist mit dem Zug nach Edinburg gefahren.* ((tr: She’s gone to Edinburgh by train))


L:  *Sie ist nach Edinburg gefahren.* ((tr: She’s gone to Edinburgh))

T:  *Gut.* ((tr: Good))

(Westgate et al., 1985, p. 278)
In the above extract we see the teacher conducting repair in a form and accuracy context even when the learner utterance is not only correct and appropriate but also contains precisely the targeted string of linguistic forms (sie ist nach Edinburg gefahren): the only problem is that the learner has added information (“by train”) which is extraneous to the target string and therefore deemed superfluous by the teacher. Although we might view this as unnecessarily pedantic teacher behaviour, the point to be emphasised is that such repair is perfectly normal within a form and accuracy context, where repair may be initiated by the teacher if the linguistic forms and patterns of interaction produced are not exactly identical to those targeted by the teacher’s pedagogical purposes.

The focus of the study

This article focuses on the structure of repair in form and accuracy contexts in the L2 classroom and on the preference organisation associated with the structure of repair in such contexts. When the context in operation is ‘form and accuracy’ and a learner makes an error of oral production which is an error of linguistic form, regardless as to whether it is an error on the level of syntax, lexis, phonology or discourse, then a lay observer might expect the teacher to frequently employ the words ‘no’ or ‘wrong’ as a negative evaluation (or at least some form of direct and overt negative evaluation) prior to an attempt to repair the error, in order to mark the presence of an error. It has frequently been observed (Johnson, 1995) that much L2 classroom interaction follows an IRE pattern (teacher Initiation, learner Reply, teacher Evaluation). The data show, however, that this is in general only an accurate description of the interaction, in a form and accuracy context when learners supply a linguistically correct reply, as in the example below:
When a learner produces a linguistically correct response to a teacher initiation, the teacher often produces an overt and direct positive evaluation. Most frequent terms used are: ‘good’, ‘yes’, ‘OK’, ‘that’s right’. However, when learners supply a linguistically incorrect reply in response to a teacher initiation, the data show a stark contrast: direct, explicit, overt negative evaluation tends to be avoided, and ‘IRE’ is in no way an accurate description of the interactional sequence in these cases. Although teacher repair of learners’ linguistic errors is a prevalent feature of L2 classroom in the database, I can only find one case of the use of bald, unmitigated, direct, overt negative evaluation involving the words ‘no’ or ‘wrong’ by teachers. In all other cases there is some form of mitigation involved, and the data show teachers using a wide variety of methods of avoiding bald, unmitigated, direct, overt negative evaluation. In other words, teachers appear to be doing interactional work specifically in order to avoid using unmitigated negative evaluation. This is a case of relevant absence which requires explication. As Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (1977, p. 361) put it: “What speakers avoid doing is as important as what they do.”

**Strategies for conducting repair without using direct negative evaluation**
First of all I will detail the great variety of strategies which teachers employ to conduct repair, when a learner makes a spoken error of linguistic form in a form and accuracy context, without performing an unmitigated negative evaluation. I will provide a single example of each strategy together with references to other examples of the strategy.

a) *use a next-turn-repair-initiator to indicate (indirectly) that there is an error which the learner should repair.* This is a method of non-evaluatory repair initiation: other-initiated self-repair.

Extract 8

L: They runs they runs quickly.
T: Once more.
L: They run quickly.
T: Yes, that’s better.

(Tsui, 1995, p. 42) (see also Riley, 1985, p. 54; Johnson, 1995, p. 19)

This is an ‘open’ kind of next-turn repair initiator (Drew, in press) and ‘pardon?’ ‘sorry?’ or ‘what?’ are also members of this class. One problem with this type of repair initiator in this context is that it does not locate precisely the item to be repaired. For example, we saw an ‘open’ kind of next-turn repair initiator used in extract 5, and the person who made the mistake was not able to locate the mistake after the repair initiation.

b) *repeat the word or phrase or part of a word which the learner used immediately prior to the error.*
This is another method of non-evaluatory repair initiation: other-initiated self-repair.

Extract 9

L:  *Er ... Qu’est-ce que ... qu’est-ce que vous dési...* (tr: er, what do you, what do you desi..))

T:  *Qu’est-ce que vous...?* (tr: what do you..?)

L:  *Avez comme fruit?* (tr: ...have in the way of fruit?)

T:  *Comme fruit.* (tr: ...in the way of fruit)

(Westgate et al., 1985, p. 276) (See also Wright, 1987, p. 55; British Council, 1985, Volume 2, p. 67)

By contrast with the previous technique, this repair technique has the advantage of locating the repairable item precisely.

c) *repeat the original question or initiation.* This is another method of non-evaluatory repair initiation: other-initiated self-repair.

Extract 10

1  T:  What is a suffix?

2  L:  Beautiful?

3  T:  This is something we forget all the time. what is a suffix?
The problem with this technique is that it does not locate or treat the error in any way. It could be that L’s utterance in line 2 is in fact providing an example of a suffix and is in fact a reasonable response. T’s repetition of the question in line 3 does not provide the learners with any feedback as to the problem with L’s response, however.

d) repeat the learner’s erroneous utterance with a rising intonation. This is another method of non-evaluatory repair initiation: other-initiated self-repair.

Extract 11

L: I am very good person and give she another one.
T: Give she?
L: Give her another one.

(British Council, 1985, Volume 2, p. 68)

This technique locates the error but has sometimes been criticised for providing the learners with erroneous input. However, as we can see in the above example, the learner is able to self-repair correctly.

e) supply a correct version of the linguistic forms. This is another method of non-evaluatory repair initiation: other-initiated other-repair.
Extract 12

L: Because she can’t
T: Because she counted..
L: Because she counted the wrong number of tourists.

(Tsui, 1995, p.48)(See also Lightbown and Spada, 1993, p. 76)

This is possibly the simplest and fastest repair technique but of course it does not allow the learner the opportunity to self-repair.

f) provide an explanation of why the answer is incorrect without explicitly stating that it is incorrect.

This is another method of non-evaluatory repair initiation: other-initiated other-repair.

Extract 13

T: Fine, right. The doctor’s office. What do we call a doctor’s office in English? Go on, go on, Louisa fine, say it.
L: Consult - consultation.
T: It’s a consultation that they are going to give, it’s a very good try, a good try. We call it a surgery, a surgery.

(Malamah-Thomas, 1987, p. 64)(See also Lightbown and Spada, 1993, p. 98)
g) accept the incorrect forms and then supply the correct forms: it is, in effect, acceptance of the incorrect forms followed by repair: other-initiated other-repair. These strange cases are in fact more common in my database than examples of unmitigated overt negative evaluation, which indicates how strong the dispreference is against direct negative evaluation. Three examples are provided to illustrate the phenomenon:

Extract 14

L: When did Fred joined army?
T: That’s right. Only when did Fred join the army? When did Fred join the army? Say it again.

(Willis, 1987, p. 154)

Extract 15

T: OK. What other kind of conductor is there? There’s the musical conductors, but what else?
L: The person who drives a car?
T: Well, yeah I guess you could say he’s a conductor but he’s we usually say he’s a driver, a car driver...

(Long, 1983, p. 12)
Extract 16

L: Is your mother play piano?
T: ‘Is your mother play piano?’ OK. Well you can say ‘Is your mother play piano?’
or ‘Is your mother a piano player?’.
L: ‘Is your mother a piano player?’

(Lightbown and Spada, 1993, p. 93)

This technique appears unsatisfactory for two reasons. Firstly, the erroneous forms are accepted by the teacher. Secondly, the learners may also become confused: if their utterances were acceptable, then why is the teacher undertaking repair? 3

h) invite other learners to repair: this may or may not include direct negative evaluation. This is other-initiated other-repair, the other repair being by a third party. It could also be termed teacher-initiated peer-repair.

Extract 17

L: Don’t losing weight.
T: OK. (to the others) Can you help him? ... Not ‘don’t’. Don’t say ‘don’t’. Use the gerund. OK. So.

(Banbrook and Skehan, 1989, p. 142)(See also Ellis, 1992, p. 115)
Sometimes teachers appear to be going to great lengths to avoid uttering the words ‘no’ and ‘wrong’:

Extract 18

T: When Emma was making the suggestions about peut-être qu’il est dans sa chambre, ((tr: perhaps he is in his bedroom)) what could you nicely have said?... Well, whoever said it. What could they have said?

L: D’accord ((tr: OK))

T: Nn, nn... Something that I mentioned to you earlier on. Well, there was d’accord, yeah, but there was something else.

(Westgate et al., 1985, p. 274)

So we can see that teachers have developed a wide variety of techniques, in a form and accuracy context, to initiate repair of learner utterances whilst simultaneously avoiding direct and overt negative evaluation.

Examples of use of mitigated negative evaluation

Now there are examples in the data of teachers using the words ‘no’ and ‘wrong’ as negative evaluations, but in every case but one the negative evaluation is not bald, overt or direct in that it is mitigated in some way. In the following case ‘wrong’ is prefaced by a positive mitigating comment.
L: I was born in January sixth
T: ok look. wrong preposition

(Dinsmore, 1985, p. 229)

Occasionally in the data we find examples of the use of direct and overt negative evaluation by the teacher in the evaluation slot after the teacher has, immediately previously, initiated self-repair: three examples of the interactional environment are provided to illustrate the phenomenon.

Extract 20

T: ok, where is John Martin’s Phung? John Martin’s?
L: oh, Gawler Place
LL: Gawler Place
T: John Martin’s? (other-initiation of self-repair)
L: Gawler Place
T: Gawler Place? no! (direct negative evaluation)

(Nunan, 1988, p.140)

Extract 21

T: I’m thinking of my friends from Paris, Sue?
L1: Um ... what are you thinking about?
T: (laughs) That depends if you want to offend your friends, doesn’t it? If you want to insult your friends......
L1: Uh...
T: Do you understand? If you think of your friends as objects (laugh), you say what.
L: Um, what are you thinking about?
T: No, not what. They are people, aren’t they?

(Guthrie, 1984, p. 192, translation from French)

Extract 22

L: They told stories and sing songs by the -
L: They told story and sung song.
T: Sung? No.
L: Sang song.
T: Once again.
L: They told story and sing song.
T: No.
L: They told story and sang song by the fire.
T: They told story and sang song by the fire.
In each of the three above cases the force of ‘no’ as negative evaluation is mitigated by virtue of its sequential location. Since a first attempt has already been made to prompt self-repair, direct and overt negative evaluation in the second repair slot is mitigated and less face-threatening than if it had occurred in the first repair-relevant slot. The teacher is in effect working his/her way down the preference ranking. We saw similar sequences in relation to the preference organisation of repair in conversation earlier in extract 5.

In the following examples we can see the teacher saying ‘no’ baldly in reply to a learner initiation or question:

Extract 23

L: So can say John’s house ... er ... which which its door is broken.
T: No you can’t.

(Hasan, 1988, p. 271)

Extract 24

L: Er do you think, ‘does she mind’, is that er
T: No, you can say to about anyone.
In these cases the interactional sequence is different and the ‘no’ does not function as a direct negative evaluation of a learner response. The teacher is simply providing an answer to a learner’s question or initiation - we have a question and answer adjacency pair rather than an IRE cycle. With the IRE cycle the teacher initiates or asks a display question in order to test and evaluate the formal accuracy of the learner’s response. The power is in the teacher’s hands and direct negative evaluation of the learner’s response is thought by many teachers and methodologists to involve loss of face and demoralisation on the part of the learner; this belief is questioned later in the article, however. In the above situations, however, the roles and the balance of power is different: a direct negative answer does not function as a negative evaluation and involves no loss of face for the learner, so the teacher can use a bald ‘no’. The learner’s unsolicited question in fact can create a potentially face-threatening situation for the teacher: if the teacher does not produce a convincing answer, the teacher may lose face, as in the following example:

Extract 25

L:  three bedroom house.
T:  All right.
L:  Why three bed, er, three bedroom? Why we don’t say three bedrooms?
T:  Ahh, oh ... I don’t know, um.
L:  Is not right.
T:  We don’t say it. We don’t say it. There’s no explanation. But we often do that in English. Three bedroom house.
L:  Don’t ask for it.
L: Yes.
T: Well, do ask why. Ask why, and 99 per cent of the time I know the answer. One per cent of the time, nobody knows the answer. If I don’t know, nobody knows.
LL: (laugh)
T: Ah, no, I don’t know the answer, sorry.

(Nunan, 1989, p. 137)

There are also examples in which the learner response is negatively evaluated in what appears to be the evaluation slot of an IRE cycle, as in the two following extracts:

Extract 26

T: There’s a lot of rain, but when you have a lot of rain, what do you have, then?
L: Thunderstorm?
T: No, what grows when you have a lot of rain?
LL: Forest.
T: Yeah, forests.

(Chaudron, 1988, p. 130)

Extract 27

T: There was also eh some years ago ah a Greek American who tried to become president do you remember his name?
L: Theodorakis?

T: Theodorakis, no, it wasn’t him

(Seedhouse, 1995, p. 398)

In these cases the learners are intoning their contributions as a question, which in effect enables the teacher to make a direct negative evaluation ‘cloaked’ as an answer to a question - mitigation is thereby involved. It appears that both teacher and learner are treating the exchange as a question-answer adjacency pair rather than as an IRE cycle. The format being used by the learner is what Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (1977, p. 379) call a guess, candidate, try or a ‘correction invitation format’: the format supplies the most accommodating environment for other-correction.

In all of the database I can only find one occasion when a teacher uses a completely bald, unmitigated, overt negative evaluation i.e. ‘no’ in the evaluation slot of an IRF/IRE sequence. Even here, I cannot be certain that the ‘no’ is completely unmitigated since the published extract does not include the interaction prior to this sequence. In this case, it is interesting to note that it is cited as an example of poor repair: in other words, the negative evaluation is negatively evaluated by the analyst (Tsui).

Extract 28

T: After they have put up their tent, what did the boys do?

L: They cooking food.

T: No, not they cooking food, pay attention.

L: They cook their meal.
T: Right, they cook their meal over an open fire.

(Tsui, 1995, p. 52)

Tsui analyses the extract in the following way:

“The teacher could also implicitly indicate the location of the error by asking the student to repeat a certain word or phrase. For example, in the text above, the teacher, instead of saying ‘No, not they cooking food’, could simply have said ‘They-’, thus implicitly indicating ‘cooking’ as the error.’” (Tsui, 1995, p. 52)

So the evidence from the database is that teachers perform a great deal of interactional work to avoid performing direct and overt negative evaluation of learner linguistic errors. When negative evaluation does occur, it is predominantly mitigated in some way.

**Why is there a dispreference for direct and unmitigated negative evaluation?**

Having established the interactional evidence for a strong dispreference for direct and overt negative evaluation of learner errors in form and accuracy contexts, we need to consider why such a dispreference should exist. The preference structure appears to be motivated by and to be derived from pedagogical recommendations, in that explicit negative evaluation of learner responses in a form and accuracy context is strongly disfavoured in current L2 pedagogy:

“If the teacher decides to correct the error, he or she can repeat the student's response with correction. This kind of modelling can be very effective because it avoids providing explicit negative evaluation and exposes students to the correct form.” (Tsui, 1995, p. 51)

“Showing incorrectness should be seen as a positive act, not a reprimand.” (Harmer, 1983,
“In the treatment of student language, we have to change our attitude towards mistakes. We must not think of them as something negative which needs some kind of punishment.” (Edge, 1989, p. 17)

In general, then, there is a close correspondence between pedagogical recommendations and the interactional evidence from the transcripts concerning what teachers actually do. The pedagogical recommendations seem to spring from a humanistic paradigm in which the learners’ feelings and emotions are taken into account. Negative evaluation, then, is thought to offend and demotivate the learners. So at this stage it appears that pedagogy and interaction are working together in harmony, although I will later argue that this is an illusion.

A different preference structure in relation to procedural problems

It sometimes happens that problems occur in form and accuracy contexts which have nothing to do with linguistic form - the trouble relates to misunderstanding or misinterpretation by learners of the lesson procedure which the teacher wishes to follow. In these cases the preference organisation in relation to repair in form and accuracy contexts which has been described does not apply at all. When repairing procedural problems, teachers very commonly use bald ‘no’s in conjunction with other-initiated other-repair, as we can see in the extracts below:

Extract 29
T: What are you?

L: I am a student.

T: No, not you, what is she? (pointing to the textbook)

L: Student.

T: Well, it looks like a school but if she’s not a teacher she’s not going to work in a

school ... She’s a lawyer...

(Johnson, 1995, p.44)

In the above extract L believes that T is asking a ‘genuine’ or referential question, and responds with a ‘genuine’ answer. However, L has got the procedure wrong; T wanted L to reply as if she were a character in the textbook.

Extract 30

LL: She asks when he came ...

T: No, no, look at the text, not not the question, look at the question.

L: Have you been waiting long?

T: Yeah have you been waiting long?

(Riley, 1985, p. 57)
T: Would you mind looking at the picture.
LL: Not at all.
T: Would you mind not looking at the writing?
LL: Not at all.
T: Would you mind not looking at the writing?
LL: So we are looking at this.
T: No. I said would you mind looking at the picture. Would you mind not looking at
the writing.
LL: Mm Alright.

(Willis, 1987, p. 169)

In the above cases ‘no’ does not function as a direct negative evaluation of learner linguistic performance: it indicates that there is a problem which needs repairing in connection with non-linguistic procedures, and hence does not seem to involve loss of face for the student. In all of the above cases the repair is teacher-initiated teacher-repair: nowhere in the data does a teacher initiate self-repair in the case of procedural problems. There is a very revealing section in Willis’ (1987) transcript of one entire lesson. Throughout the 55 pages of transcript, the teacher meticulously avoids direct and overt negative evaluation of learner utterances when operating in form and accuracy contexts. There are several instances of the teacher stating that erroneous forms are acceptable and then supplying the correct forms (as in extracts 14-16 above). In one case, (see below) however, the teacher does say ‘no’ in an evaluation slot. The learners here are constructing questions and answers
based on prompts from a textbook:

Extract 32

L1:  Erm. Does Fred (a book character) like being a soldier?
T:  Yes. that’s right. And what do you think’s the answer to that one? Constantine?
L2:  Uh! He doesn’t like being a soldier.
T:  No. (in agreement) I don’t think he does.
L2:  He hates being soldier.
T:  Well done! He hates being a soldier. Mohavi, ask Virginia er if she likes being a student.
L3:  Er does
T:  Do
L3:  Ah! Sorry. Do you, do you like er a sol ... being a soldier?
T:  No, she’s not a soldier
LL:  (laughter)

(Willis, 1987, p. 155)

What happened here is that there was a change in procedure - from making questions based on textbook prompts to making questions based on the classroom situation. L3 failed to notice this procedural shift. The teacher’s ‘no’ is therefore not a negative evaluation of the linguistic forms produced by the learner: the utterance is in fact linguistically correct. It is merely a repair of a procedural problem and is therefore thought not to demotivate the student. Trouble with linguistic form is regarded as problematic and face-threatening, whereas trouble with procedure is not. Both of these tendencies are
evident in the preference organisation of repair in classroom interaction.\textsuperscript{4}

We can conclude here that the preference structure relating to the repair of trouble with linguistic form marks this trouble as problematic and face-threatening. The preference structure relating to the repair of procedural trouble marks this trouble as non-problematic and non-face-threatening.

The paradox: pedagogy and interaction in opposition

Now as a result of the above analysis we can see that there appears to be a paradox at the heart of recent, broadly ‘communicative’ approaches to repair. On the one hand teachers tell learners not to worry about making linguistic errors and even encourage them to try out hypotheses and make plenty of linguistic errors:

“A lot of the things that we call mistakes can also be seen as learning steps. We should be pleased to see them... Unless students make mistakes, they can’t work out better rules.” (Edge, 1989, p. 17)

On the other hand, by avoiding direct and overt negative evaluation of linguistic errors, teachers are marking repair of linguistic errors as a heavily dispreferred sequence: the interactional message is being transmitted that making errors is an embarrassing, face-threatening matter. As Levinson (1983, p. 333) points out, the implied underlying rule for speech production is “try to avoid the dispreferred action - the action that generally occurs in dispreferred or marked format.” In other words, the pedagogical message (it’s OK to make linguistic errors) is being directly contradicted by the interactional message (linguistic errors are terrible faux pas). The words ‘no’, ‘wrong’, ‘mistake’ and ‘error’ in relation to linguistic form seem to be marked as verging on the unmentionable by their
relevant absence or extreme mitigation in form and accuracy contexts. If one wanted to indicate on an interactional level to learners that linguistic errors were of no importance, one would have to use the same preference organisation of repair as is used to treat procedural problems i.e. immediate, unmitigated other-initiated other-repair with use of ‘no’. As Drew (1994, p. 752) puts it:

“... preferred actions such as acceptances are normally produced unhesitatingly, without delay, are delivered right at the start of the response turn, are packaged in short turns, and are unmitigated....... Dispreferred actions are normally produced in variously mitigated or attenuated forms: and they are often accompanied by accounts, explanations, and the like.”

Teachers are avoiding direct and overt negative evaluation of learners’ linguistic errors with the best intentions in the world, namely to avoid embarrassing and demotivating them. However, in doing so, they are interactionally marking linguistic errors as embarrassing and problematic.

What is the attitude of learners to correction?

It might be interesting at this point to consider in more depth the question of whether teachers need to avoid direct and overt negative evaluation of learner errors, and whether learners are actually offended, embarrassed or demotivated by correction. Nunan (1988, pp. 89-94) reports on large-scale research from the Australian Adult Migrant Education Program. In a survey of the most popular and least popular learning activities, students gave ‘error correction’ a ‘very high’ rating, whereas teachers gave ‘error correction’ a ‘low’ rating. Teachers gave ‘student self-discovery of errors’ a ‘very high’ rating, whereas students gave it a ‘low’ rating. As Nunan points out, this is a dramatic mismatch. Teachers apparently want to avoid conducting other-repair and want to initiate student self-repair: this is confirmed by the interactional evidence of what teachers actually do, cited above. This is also confirmed by methodological recommendations (Harmer, 1983, p. 62; Edge, 1989, p. 24). The students, however, do not want to repair their own errors - they want the teacher to conduct other-
initiated other-repair.

Questionnaire research by Cathcart and Olsen (1976) concurs with Nunan’s findings. All students agreed that they wished to be corrected when they made oral errors. Students were asked to rate different correction techniques. The two types of grammar correction which received the highest approval ratings were both other-initiated other-repair techniques used by the teacher, whereas the two types of grammar correction which received the highest disapproval ratings were techniques in which no other-repair was performed by the teacher (Cathcart and Olsen, 1976, p. 45). So there appears to be another paradox in recent, broadly ‘communicative’ approaches to L2 classroom repair. Although the clear research evidence is that learners want teachers to conduct other-initiated other-repair on their linguistic errors, teachers in general tend to avoid doing so and tend to prefer other-initiated self-repair.

Now there seems to be a consensus in the pedagogical literature that learner self-repair of their own linguistic errors is better than teacher-repair, and the evidence from the database of the current study is that other-initiation of self-repair actually predominates in form and accuracy contexts. There are some seemingly powerful arguments for initiating self-repair:

1) other-repair creates negative affect, whereas self-repair does not. Ellis suggests that self-repair “...is less likely to result in a negative affective response” (1994, p. 586). Tsui (1995, p. 43) claims that:

“the kind of feedback that a teacher provides affects student learning. A teacher who constantly provides negative feedback is bound to create a sense of failure and frustration among students, and will inhibit student contribution.”

2) other-initiated other-repair is heavily dispreferred in ‘real-world’ conversation, so it should not be used in the L2 classroom. Edge justifies self-correction by stating that “people usually prefer to put
their own mistakes right rather than be corrected by someone else” (1989, p. 24).

Now these two arguments are linked in that both assume that learners’ face will be threatened by the use of other-initiated other-repair. In everyday free conversation this is perfectly true. However, as Van Lier (1988, p. 184) points out, “learners are not ordinary people communicating while they go about their daily activities, but are members of the classroom community, which has its own rules as to what is appropriate and what constitutes face threat.” Now there is interactional evidence in the transcripts, quite apart from the two questionnaire studies cited above, which suggests that learners realise this point and do not perceive other-initiated other-repair of linguistic errors together with direct and overt negative evaluation to be problematic or face-threatening in the institutional L2 classroom situation. This is evident in that when learners repair each other’s linguistic errors during group and whole-class work, they have no qualms whatsoever about using ‘no’ together with other-initiated other-repair. Three examples are provided to illustrate this phenomenon. In the following extract three Dutch learners are discussing a problem of language form in a group: they are speaking a mixture of Dutch and German, so only the English translation is provided:

Extract 33

L1: to write down here
L2: yes
L3: hey where he wants to travel to and for how long you
L1: no where where he wants to travel to where where where
L2: no the customs officer

(Kasper, 1986, p. 217)
Extract 34

L2: Servis...
L3: Um... accusative, isn’t it?
L1: No, it’s ablative. Sad ... The verb will be ‘will be carried’.
L3: The subject is ...
L2: Portatur ...
L1: Portabuntur .. Will be carried by the sad slaves ...
L2: A servis... servi...
L3: No, you should ... um ... heavy burdens is the subject, because that’s what it’s having
done to it, you see.

(Barnes et al., 1990, p. 96)

Extract 35

T: Present. If I fall in I will .. I’ll .. drown.
L1: Present.
LL: No .. future.
T: No .. future.

(British Council, 1985, Volume 2, p. 44)
In the above extract the teacher, who meticulously avoids direct negative evaluation of learners’ linguistic errors throughout the transcript, uses it in this case as an echo of LL’s direct negative evaluation of L1. The teacher’s direct negative evaluation is mitigated by both its sequential position and the fact that it is repeating someone else’s utterance: it is in effect agreeing with LL as much as it is negatively evaluating L1.

It is of course necessary to note that the balance of power, distance and status is constituted differently in learner-learner interaction and teacher-learner interaction. Nevertheless, the interactional evidence suggests that learners find direct and unmitigated other-initiated other-correction of linguistic errors unproblematic and non-face-threatening in the L2 classroom situation, and this is confirmed by questionnaire research reported by Nunan and by Cathcart and Olsen. Paradoxically, then, learners appear to have grasped better than teachers and methodologists that, within the interactional organisation of the L2 classroom, making linguistic errors and having them corrected directly and overtly is not an embarrassing matter. Teachers and methodologists, however, seem to persist in treating linguistic errors as face-threatening and problematic on an interactional level.

The article has so far focused rather narrowly on a single perspective and a single interpretation of the data in order to develop an argument, and it may well have occured to readers that there are alternative explanations for the phenomena observed in the data. For example, it could be argued that the teachers in extracts 8-18 are merely allowing the learners the opportunity to self-repair as part of the language learning process, and that the repair of linguistic errors is worth devoting interactional time and effort to. My reply would be that this is certainly what teachers are intending to do from a pedagogical point of view. But the point is that the task-as-workplan never translates directly into the task-in-process because there is a reflexive relationship between pedagogy and interaction and because
there is an intervening level of organisation, i.e. the interactional organisation of the L2 classroom. So from an interactional point of view, what teachers are actually doing in practice is operating a preference organisation which marks linguistic errors as embarrassing and face-threatening.

Discussion

This article has argued that, in this particular case, pedagogy and interaction work in direct opposition to one another. The pedagogical recommendation that teachers should avoid direct and unmitigated negative evaluation of learners’ linguistic errors, in order that those errors should be treated as unimportant and unembarrassing, directly produces the consequence that errors are treated as important, problematic and embarrassing because of the preference structure of the interaction. In this case, then, pedagogy ignores the interactional organisation of the L2 classroom to its detriment. By contrast, direct and unmitigated other-repair by the teacher would mark linguistic errors as unimportant and unembarrassing on an interactional level; pedagogy and interaction would then be working in tandem.

It is not the aim of this article to make the somewhat simplistic pedagogical recommendation that teachers ‘ought’ to change their habits and always conduct direct, unmitigated other-repair of learners’ linguistic errors in order to mark them as unimportant and unembarrassing. Rather, the discussion should be understood to exemplify the following important points:
Firstly, it is possible, using a CA methodology and a large and varied database of L2 lessons, to trace the interactional consequences of particular pedagogical recommendations. For example, this article provides many examples of different repair techniques employed by teachers, and it will be evident to the reader that the different techniques have different effects on the flow of the interaction. Pedagogical recommendations which are accompanied by transcript evidence of what actually happens in the classroom (i.e. evidence concerning the task-in-process) may well appear more convincing than recommendations presented on a conceptual level and without any recognition of their interactional consequences (i.e. in terms of a task-as-workplan).

Secondly, L2 classroom interaction is a variety of institutional discourse which has its own peculiar organisation which can be characterised and described (Seedhouse, 1996a). Some pedagogical recommendations appear to be made on the basis of the implicit assumption that L2 classroom interaction has the same interactional structure as conversation. For example, Edge justifies self-correction by stating that “people usually prefer to put their own mistakes right rather than be corrected by someone else” (1989, p. 24). Now in conversation unmitigated other-initiated other-repair is indeed heavily dispreferred, face-threatening and occurs relatively rarely. When it does occur, it often leads to arguments, as in the extract below. Indeed, one defining characteristic of an argument is that interactants conduct bald, unmitigated other-initiated other-repair on each other.

Extract 36

A: ... had to put new gaskets on the oil pan to stop the leak, and then I put- and then-
R: That was a gas leak.
A: It was an oil leak buddy.
B: It's a gas leak.
A: It's an oil leak.

((dispute continues for many turns))

(Levinson, 1983, p. 360)

However, the point is that repair in the L2 classroom is organised in a different fashion to conversation. If pedagogical recommendations concerning repair are motivated by the assumption that L2 learners will be offended by direct, unmitigated other-initiated other-repair, then the evidence presented in this article suggests that the assumption may be mistaken.

Thirdly, there has been strong recent interest in why learners don’t learn what teachers teach (Nunan, 1994). To put it in Breen’s (1989) terms, why is the task-in-process (what actually happens) different to the task-as-workplan (what is supposed to happen)? From the perspective of this article, one answer is that pedagogy can never be translated directly into classroom interaction, because there is an intervening level of organisation, i.e. the interactional organisation of the L2 classroom. The pedagogical intention inherent in the task-as-workplan becomes transformed by the interactional organisation of the L2 classroom to become the task-in-process. This article has illustrated the point by showing how the pedagogical intention to persuade learners that it is alright to make linguistic errors becomes transformed by the interactional organisation of the L2 classroom into the message that errors are embarrassing.

The general implicit assumption in much current literature appears to be that the relationship between pedagogy and interaction is a simple, unproblematic and unidirectional one in which pedagogy is translated directly into interaction. This article has attempted to show that the relationship
between pedagogy and interaction is a complex and reflexive one, and that pedagogical recommendations may have quite unforeseen interactional consequences which may work in opposition to the pedagogical effort. It would clearly be best for pedagogical recommendations to work in harmony with the interactional organisation of the L2 classroom rather than in opposition to it. In order for pedagogical intentions to be implemented effectively, then, it is important for us to develop our understanding of the interactional organisation of the L2 classroom. It is suggested that studies which combine a CA methodology with a large and varied database may offer a way forward.

Endnotes

1. For a discussion of CA use of terms of informal quantification such as ‘often’, ‘frequently’, etc., please see the appendix.

2. By this I mean that there is no explicit use of evaluation in the surface forms of the repair initiation by the teacher. However, it may be that some evaluation is nonetheless implicit in the teacher’s turn, since the institutional role of teachers makes it hard for teachers to avoid being seen as evaluators.

3. I am indebted to Dr Keith Richards of Aston University for pointing out that my analysis here oversimplifies the issues. It may be that the teachers are saying ‘yes’ to acknowledge and appreciate the learners’ contributions and may not in fact be saying that the linguistic forms are correct. I am also grateful to an anonymous Language Learning reviewer for pointing out that it would be very helpful to have access to the intonation patterns in the cases of extracts 14-16. What I have interpreted as the teachers’ acceptance of the learners’ incorrect forms may not actually be intoned in an accepting way. Unfortunately, I do not have access to audio or video recordings of these extracts.

4. I am grateful to an anonymous Language Learning reviewer for pointing out that it would be interesting to consider whether ‘content’ activities and procedural activities constitute learner-teacher power and distance relations differently. I feel that the question is beyond the scope of the present article.

5. The article has tended to generalise about learners as if they were not individuals with diverse preferences. Nunan’s and Cathcart and Olsen’s research also have this tendency. I think that it is unfortunate but unavoidable if we are to be able to generalise.
References


York.


Appendix

In this appendix a brief description of the database underlying the present study is provided; a fuller description is available in Seedhouse (1996a). There then follows a discussion of issues relating to databases in general. The database on which this study relies is made up of four distinct databases.

Database 1) Norwegian data.

In September 1994 I made audio and video recordings of complete English lessons by seven different teachers in Norwegian schools. The institutions covered were at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. The recordings were transcribed and the transcripts published as Seedhouse (1995).

Database 2) Published and unpublished extracts from lesson transcripts.

This is an ad-hoc photocopied collection of extracts from lesson transcripts. Some of these come from published sources such as articles in journals and books on the L2 classroom; some come from unpublished sources such as Masters or PhD theses. The data total approximately 300 lessons or fragments of lessons of hugely varying length from 11 different countries and represent the teaching of 6 different L2s. There is a large variety in terms of the type of institution, type of class, level of learners’ proficiency in L2, culture, country of origin and age of learners covered in this database. The majority of these extracts are not accompanied by audio or video material.

Database 3) Antony Peck’s video data
Kindly made available to me by Antony Peck (University of York), this is a collection of video recordings of whole L2 lessons, totalling 16 lessons. 4 different European countries are represented.

Database 4) Paul Seedhouse’s video data

This database consists of two whole lessons: one a French lesson in a British further education college and the other an EFL lesson in a British university with a multi-lingual class.

As Van Lier (1988, p. 5) points out, “One of the problems with L2 classroom research is that there is such a tremendous variety of L2 classrooms.” The nature and variety of the database is also of interest to researchers, and to L2 teachers in particular in determining the generality of the findings. In Seedhouse (1996a) I argue that, because of the diversity of L2 classrooms, one should not only specify the database in terms of number of lessons or fragments of lessons, but also in terms of the following factors, in order that the diversity of the database and the relevance of the research to the reader’s own situation might be assessed:

L1 of the learners

multilingual or monolingual classes

culture

country of origin

age of learners

type of institution

level of learners’ proficiency in L2
The relevant information relating to the database underlying this study is detailed below.

**Database 1) Norwegian data.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L1 of the learners</th>
<th>Norwegian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>multilingual or monolingual classes</td>
<td>monolingual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>culture</td>
<td>Western European</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>country of origin</td>
<td>Norway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>age of learners</td>
<td>8-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>type of institution</td>
<td>primary school, lower secondary school and upper secondary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>level of learners’ proficiency in L2</td>
<td>beginners to advanced</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Database 2) Published and unpublished extracts from lesson transcripts.**

It has not proved possible to provide accurate information for all of the extracts, since the source material often is not specific enough.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L1 of the learners</th>
<th>many</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>multilingual or monolingual classes</td>
<td>both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>culture</td>
<td>many</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
country of origin 11 different countries in Europe, North and South America, Africa and Australia

age of learners young children to aged adults

type of institution state schools, private language schools, universities

level of learners’ proficiency in L2 beginners to advanced

Database 3) Antony Peck’s video data

L1 of the learners French, German,

multilingual or monolingual classes monolingual

culture Western European

country of origin France, Germany, Denmark, Spain

age of learners young children to adults

type of institution state schools, private language schools

level of learners’ proficiency in L2 beginners to advanced

Database 4) Paul Seedhouse’s video data

L1 of the learners English and a variety of European and Asian languages
multilingual or monolingual classes both
culture Western and Asian
country of origin England and a variety of European and Asian
age of learners adult
type of institution university and
level of learners’ proficiency in L2 beginners to upper intermediate

Database Issues

In this section I very briefly address issues relating to databases supporting L2 classroom research in general, the CA attitude to databases and issues relating to the database on which this study is founded. A lengthy discussion of these issues can be found in Seedhouse (1996a). If one operated inside a quantitative paradigm (which this study does not), then one would consider that the external validity of research would be related in some way to the size of the database. To establish the adequacy of the present study, one might relate the size of the current database with those of other, similar studies. A logical starting point for the discussion, therefore, would be to consider what previous researchers have considered an adequate size of sample for their classroom research. I discuss previous studies at length in Seedhouse (1996a) and conclude that a total of between five and ten lessons has generally been considered a reasonable database from which recent classroom research into communication in both L1 and L2 classrooms has been able to generalise and draw conclusions. Indeed, some prominent recent studies have not stipulated the exact size of their underlying database. By comparison, then, the current study is founded on a very large database.
However, this study operates within a qualitative paradigm, in which there is no assumption that having more data is necessarily better than having less data, the most important issue being the quality of the analysis. We should also consider, within a qualitative paradigm, how the data relate to the specific methodology chosen. Since the methodology used in this study is CA, I will now very briefly consider the CA attitude to quantification and to databases and consider the adequacy of the current database from a CA perspective. CA is essentially a qualitative, emic form of analysis:

“The central focus of CA is to describe the conversational practices that are the conditions of intelligible, coordinated action in the social world. These practices can only be approached from an ‘emic’ perspective: they are explicated interpretively and “from within”. Quantitative studies have not, so far, matched the kinds of compelling evidence for the features and uses of conversational practices that have emerged from the ‘case by case’ analysis of singular exhibits of interactional conduct. It does not, at the present time, appear likely that they will do so in the future. For quantitative studies inexorably draw the analyst into an ‘external’ view of the data of interaction, draining away the conduct-evidenced local intelligibility of particular situated actions which is the ultimate source of security that the object under investigation is not a theoretical or statistical artifact.” (Heritage, 1995, p. 406)

CA, then, tends not to engage in the verification of validity and reliability typical of quantitative, etic approaches. The main arguments for CA’s deferring with respect to quantitative, statistical treatment of data are detailed in Schegloff (1993) and Heritage (1995). One might then object that the present study should therefore contain no use of quantification, whereas it clearly does so in describing regularities in the interaction. Schegloff counters this objection in the following way:

“Informal quantification is the product of a quite different - but nonetheless methodological - orientation to empirical materials. Terminology such as ‘occasionally’ or ‘massively’ reports an experience or grasp of frequency, not a count; an account of an investigator's sense of frequency over the range of a research experience, not in a specifically bounded body of data; a characterization of distribution fully though tacitly informed by the analytic import of what is being characterized.” (Schegloff, 1993, p.119)

Nevertheless, there are considerable advantages in having a database for CA analysis which is
large and varied. This paper examines a phenomenon in which the use of ‘no’ by teachers in the ‘evaluation’ slot in IRF/IRE sequences in form and accuracy contexts appears to be strongly dispreferred. This relevant absence of ‘no’ was first pointed out to me by Drew (personal communication, 1995), but my initial reaction was that it was probably due to an individual teacher’s personal style. However, on searching through the database I found to my surprise that, not only were the words ‘no’ and ‘wrong’ strikingly absent in the ‘evaluation’ slot in IRF/IRE sequences in form and accuracy contexts, but teachers appeared often to be performing interactional work to specifically avoid saying ‘no’ or ‘wrong’ or to mitigate its use in some way. Now it was the fact that I found that many different teachers in different institutions in different countries teaching different L2s were conducting the same interactional work that convinced me that this was a phenomenon worth investigating and requiring explanation. Having a large and varied collection was essential in determining the robustness of the phenomenon and also in determining, from analysis of a variety of individual instances, how the phenomenon could be related to the pedagogical focus and interactional organisation of that individual L2 classroom context.

The majority of extracts in this study are taken from database 2, which consists of secondary sources, often from articles and books published by applied linguists. This selection of extracts has certain advantages and disadvantages. The main advantages, as I see them, are of size and heterogeneity of database, as mentioned above. The main disadvantages are as follows. Firstly, most secondary source extracts have not been transcribed in the detail normally required for CA studies, which implies in turn that certain subtle and delicate details of the interaction may be missed. Secondly, secondary source extracts may have been prepared to reflect the theoretical or practical preoccupations of the original writers and do not, therefore, give a direct window onto classroom interaction. Thirdly, original video and audio data sources are generally not available in the case of secondary sources, which means that finer detail, for example concerning intonation, cannot be
verified.

I am grateful to an anonymous *Language Learning* reviewer for pointing out that this paper makes the assumption that all of the teachers involved in the lesson extracts are operating within a broadly ‘communicative’ paradigm. Since the database contains extracts from a wide variety of published and unpublished sources, I cannot be certain of this. However, I felt that all of the seven teachers whose lessons I recorded in Norway for database 1 (Seedhouse, 1995) were clearly operating within a broadly ‘communicative’ paradigm, and it is my experience that it is only those teachers who feel confident that they are using up-to-date methods who are willing to have their lessons recorded.