The definitive version of this article is published by Blackwell as:
Paul Seedhouse (2004), Different Perspectives on Language Classroom Interaction, 
Language Learning, 54 (S1), 55-100
http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/118759287/abstract
CHAPTER TWO

Different Perspectives on Language Classroom Interaction

This chapter reviews several approaches which have been employed over the last thirty years to analyse L2 classroom interaction. Whilst the review is critical in some respects in order to prepare the ground for a CA perspective on institutional discourse, it nonetheless tries to uncover elements of compatibility between CA and the approaches reviewed and to integrate them wherever possible. The first approach reviewed is discourse analysis, which has been the basis for numerous coding schemes in language teaching. I then consider the communicative approach’s perspective on interaction in the language classroom. I then show that there has been strong recent research interest in developing dynamic and variable approaches to classroom interaction. This is followed by a discussion of issues relating to databases underlying such research and a specification of the database underlying this study. I then consider the relationship between CA and ethnography and conclude by introducing the CA perspective on institutional discourse on which this study is based.

1.1 Discourse Analysis Approaches

According to Levinson (1983, p. 286) there are two major approaches to the study of naturally occurring interaction: discourse analysis (DA) and conversation analysis (CA). The majority of previous approaches to L2 classroom interaction have implicitly or explicitly adopted what is fundamentally a DA approach. In this section I review the DA approach critically, but this is not in an attempt to discredit it or suggest that it is worthless. Any current attempt at analysis of L2 classroom interaction is very much built on the foundations of what has been achieved through the DA approach. Furthermore, we will see (as already mentioned in Chapter 1) that DA is actually used in practice as one integral component of CA and that integration would in effect enable DA to function in a much broader sociolinguistic context and create a link to the pedagogical level. So in the following section I am making explicit the limitations of the DA approach when it is used in isolation and arguing strongly for it to be integrated into a CA approach. DA uses principles and methodology typical of linguistics to analyse classroom discourse in structural-functional linguistic terms (Chaudron, 1988, p. 14). For example, “Could I borrow your pencil?” could be mapped as “request”. Once sequences of speech acts or moves have been plotted, a set of rules can be written which show how the units fit together to form coherent discourse. Then, hierarchical systems which depict the overall organisation of classroom discourse can be developed.

The outstanding study of (L1) classroom interaction which takes this DA approach is Sinclair and Coulthard (1975). Probably their most significant finding as far as the teaching profession is concerned is their identification of the three-part sequence typical of classroom interaction. This sequence is generally known as Teacher Initiation, Learner Response and Teacher Follow-Up or Feedback (IRF) in the British school, and Initiation, Response and Evaluation (IRE) in the American school (Chaudron, 1988, p. 14). We will refer to it as the IRF/IRE cycle in this study. It should be noted that a full-scale and explicit DA model of the organisation of L2 classroom interaction has never been published. The DA system of analysing classroom interaction has proved highly appealing to the language teaching profession (particularly as it uses a linguistic approach) to the extent that the majority of studies of classroom interaction have been...
based more or less explicitly on it. This includes the many coding schemes which have been developed specifically for the L2 classroom. All coding schemes for L2 classroom interaction are implicitly based on a DA paradigm and embody “the assumption that those features of the interaction of teacher and taught which are relevant to the researcher’s purposes are evident ‘beneath’ or ‘within’ the words exchanged.” (Edwards and Westgate, 1994, p. 61).

The basis of the DA approach and of classroom coding schemes is that an interactant is making one move on one level at a time. The move the teacher is making can be specified and coded as a pedagogic move, for example initiates or replies. This one pedagogic move on one level at a time coding approach is the basis of the following coding systems developed especially for the L2 classroom: The COLT instrument (Froehlich, Spada and Allen, 1985), TALOS (Ullman and Geva, 1984), FLINT (Moskowitz, 1976); a list of observation instruments is available in Chaudron (1988, p. 18). Now some of the above coding systems involve coding on different dimensions of analysis, such as content, type of activity, skill focus and language used (see Chaudron, 1988, p. 22 for a summary). But the assumption is still that in each of these separate coding dimensions the teacher is making one pedagogical move at a time and the coder has to make a choice as to which slot the pedagogical move should be coded into. The DA approach has been subject to considerable criticism on a theoretical level, most notably by Levinson (1983, p. 289), who suggests that there are strong reasons to believe that such models are fundamentally inappropriate to the subject matter, and thus irremediably inadequate. The following is a simplified summary of Levinson’s (1983, pp. 287-294) discussion of the main problems inherent in a DA approach:

- A single utterance can perform multiple speech acts at a time, but DA translates a single utterance into a single speech act.
- Responses can be addressed not only to the illocutionary force of utterances, but also to their perlocutionary force; perlocutions are in principle unlimited in kind and number.
- It is impossible to specify in advance what kinds of behavioural units will carry out interactional acts: laughter and silence can function as responses, for example.
- There is no straightforward correlation between form and function.
- Sequential context and extra-linguistic context can play a role in determining utterance function.
- In contrast to syntax, it is not possible to specify a set of rules which show how the units fit together to form coherent discourse; cases of impossible or ill-formed discourses are hard, if not impossible, to find.
- The textual analyses produced by a DA approach are quite superficial and disappointing, involving an intuitive mapping of unmotivated categories onto a restricted range of data.

It may be argued that such theoretical problems do not mean that the DA approach is fundamentally unsuitable in practical terms for the analysis of L2 classroom interaction, given that the DA approach has proved popular with the L2 teaching profession. I therefore propose to analyse extracts from L2 lessons in an attempt to reveal the fundamental practical limitations of the DA approach in isolation and in order to demonstrate that it tends to homogenise and over-simplify the interaction. A focus on the IRF/IRE cycle (and on other pedagogic moves) appears
attractive at first, in that all an analyst need do is identify them within the interaction, and the discourse analysis is virtually complete. The following two extracts both demonstrate teacher-led IRF/IRE sequences.

Extract 2.1

1 T: After they have put up their tent, what did the boys do?
2 L: They cooking food.
3 T: No, not they cooking food, pay attention.
4 L: They cook their meal.
5 T: Right, they cook their meal over an open fire.

(Tsui, 1995, p. 52)

The focus in the above extract is on the accurate production of a string of linguistic forms by the learners. So although no-one would have any problem in understanding the gist of the learner’s first utterance, it is not accepted by the teacher, and the interaction continues until the correct forms are produced. The Initiation slot of the IRF/IRE cycle is prompting the learner to produce a specific sequence of linguistic forms; the Response slot is the learner’s attempt to produce that sequence; the Follow-up slot is, in line 3, negative evaluation and prompt for the repeated attempt at the production of a specific sequence of linguistic forms; in line 5 it is positive evaluation plus repetition of the correct sequence of forms. The type of repair used is exposed correction (Jefferson, 1987) in which correction becomes the interactional business; the flow of the interaction is put on hold while the trouble is corrected.

Extract 2.2

1 T: Vin, have you ever been to the movies? What’s your favorite movie?
2 L: Big.
3 T: Big, OK, that’s a good movie, that was about a little boy inside a big man, wasn’t it?
4 L: Yeah, boy get surprise all the time.
5 T: Yes, he was surprised, wasn’t he? Usually little boys don’t do the things that men do, do they?
6 L: No, little boy no drink.
7 T: That’s right, little boys don’t drink.

(Johnson, 1995, p. 23)

Taking first of all a conventional DA approach, extract 2.2 can also be analysed quite straightforwardly. What we have is a sequence of consecutive IRF/IRE cycles which can be coded as follows: Line 1: Initiation; Line 2: Reply; Line 3: Follow-Up and Initiation; Line 4: Reply; Line 5: Follow-Up and Initiation; Line 6: Reply; Line 7: Follow-Up. The analysis is simple and complete and we can confirm that this is therefore traditional, lockstep classroom interaction of the type often criticised by the communicative approach (Dinsmore, 1985; Nunan, 1987) because it is teacher-dominated and different to genuine interaction. Using the DA approach, then, the analyses are quick, straightforward and complete; we have an impression of
I will now reanalyse extract 2.2 using a CA methodology and suggest that in fact this is a very complex, fluid and dynamic piece of interaction indeed, and that there are huge differences between extracts 2.1 and 2.2. If we analyse turn-taking, sequence organisation, repair and topic at the same time, we can see that the learner in extract 2.2 is able to develop a sub-topic and is allowed interactional space. In line 1 T introduces the carrier topic (films) and constrains L’s turn in line 2, which is a minimum response appropriate to the turn. In line 3 T shifts the topic slightly from the carrier topic (films) to the sub-topic of the specific film “Big” which has been nominated by L. In doing so T validates and approves L’s sub-topic by calling it a good movie. This particular comedy movie involves a “magical” swop in which a young boy and a man have their minds transferred into each other's bodies. T constrains L’s next turn by making a general statement summarising the plot of the movie (“that was about a little boy inside a big man”) together with a tag question. This allocates L a turn, constrains the topic of L’s turn (the plot of the film “Big”) and simultaneously provides the other students in the class (who may not know the film) with sufficient information to be able to follow the evolving dialogue. The tag question effectively requires L to confirm the accuracy of T’s summary of the film’s plot, but also allows L the interactive space (if L wishes) to develop the sub-topic. L does confirm T’s summary of the sub-topic and then chooses to contribute new information which develops the sub-topic (the film’s plot), namely in line 4 (“boy get surprise all the time”). This utterance is linguistically incorrect, although the propositional content is clear to T. Since L is introducing ‘new’ information, L is effectively developing the sub-topic, to which T could respond in his/her next turn. At this point T could choose to (1) correct the learner’s utterance (2) continue to develop the sub-topic (3) decline to adopt L’s sub-topic and change the course of the interaction: T has superior interactional rights (Mehan, 1979) and is not obliged to adopt the direction in which L is pushing the interaction. T effectively chooses to combine choices (1) and (2) in line 5: “Yes, he was surprised, wasn’t he?” There is positive evaluation of the propositional content of the learner utterance followed by an expansion of the learner utterance into a correct sequence of linguistic forms. The type of repair used is embedded correction (Jefferson, 1987, p. 95), that is, a correction done as a by-the-way occurrence in the context of a social action, which in this case is an action of agreement and confirmation.

This form of correction and expansion is highly reminiscent of adult-child conversation, (see, for example, adult-child conversation transcripts in Harris and Coltheart (1986, p. 50), Peccei (1994, p. 83), and Painter (1989, p. 38)) and the technique being used by the teacher here is often termed scaffolding (Johnson, 1995, p. 75). Further in line 5, T then accepts L’s invitation to develop the sub-topic, and T’s statement “usually little boys don’t do the things that men do” also simultaneously provides the other students in the class with an explanation as to why the boy was surprised all the time, thus enabling them to continue to follow the evolving dialogue. The tag question (line 5) again allocates L a turn and effectively allot him the interactional space to continue to develop the sub-topic should he wish to do so. L uses ‘no’ in line 6 to agree with the negative tag-question and chooses to develop the sub-topic by providing an example from the film to illustrate T’s previous generalised statement with: “little boy no drink”. Again his utterance is linguistically incorrect, although the propositional content is clear. Since L is again introducing ‘new’ information, L effectively invites T to respond to this elaboration of the sub-topic in
T’s next turn. T’s response in line 7 is similar to line 5 in that T performs an action of agreement, simultaneously corrects L’s utterance (using embedded correction) and displays a correct version for the other students.

What is clear from the analysis of the above extract is that, although it could at first sight be mistaken for a rigid, plodding lockstep IRF/IRE cycle sequence in which everything is pre-planned and predictable, the interaction is in fact dynamic, fluid and locally managed on a turn-by-turn basis to a considerable extent. There is some degree of pre-planning in that the teacher has an overall idea of what is to be achieved in the interaction and in that it is the teacher who introduces the carrier topic of films and has overall control of the speech exchange system. However, the question in line 1 is an open or referential one - the teacher does not know how L will respond and L is able to nominate and develop a sub-topic. I would now like to demonstrate that the teacher is balancing multiple and sometimes conflicting demands. As Edmondson (1985, p. 162) puts it, “The complexity of the classroom is such that several things may be going on publicly through talk at the same time.” The teacher is orienting to five separate (though related) concerns simultaneously.

1) The teacher’s pedagogical focus (Johnson, 1995, p. 23) “was to allow the students to share their ideas and possibly generate some new vocabulary words within the context of the discussion.” This implies that the teacher needs to control the overall topic whilst allowing the learners some interactional space to develop their own sub-topics. The teacher has to orient, then, to an overall pedagogical plan.

2) The teacher also has to respond to the ideas and personal meanings which the learner chooses to share, and does so successfully in that he/she develops the sub-topic introduced by the learner. So in lines 5 and 7 the teacher responds to the learner utterance with a conversational action of agreement which validates the propositional content of the utterance as well as the introduction of the sub-topic.

3) The teacher also responds to linguistic incorrectness in the individual learner’s utterances and conducts embedded repair on them. The linguistic repair is performed in a mitigated way because it is prefaced by an action of agreement and approval and because this type of embedded correction can be treated as a by-the-way matter.

4) The teacher must also orient to the other learners in the class. One problem faced by teachers is that individual learners often produce responses which are inaudible or incomprehensible to the other students in the class. So in lines 5 and 7 the teacher is simultaneously displaying approved versions of learner utterances so that the other learners are able to follow the propositional content of the interaction and are also able to receive correctly formed linguistic input.

5) One of the most difficult feats in L2 teaching is to maintain a simultaneous dual focus on both form and meaning (Seedhouse, 1997b). The teacher in the above extract is skilfully managing to maintain elements of a simultaneous dual focus on both form and meaning. There is a focus on form in that the teacher upgrades and expands the learner’s utterances on a linguistic level, which means that the learners have a linguistically correct utterance which can function as both model and input. The focus is simultaneously also on meaning in that the learner is able to contribute ‘new’ information concerning his/her personal experiences and to develop a sub-topic.
Now the above CA analysis does not dispute that extract 2.2 consists of IRF/IRE cycles; the DA analysis is certainly right to point this out. However, the point which is missed in the DA approach is that the IRF/IRE cycle performs different interactional and pedagogical work according to the context in which it is operating. This is clear if we contrast the interactional work the IRF/IRE cycle is doing in extract 2.1 with extract 2.2. Some studies of L2 classroom interaction (Dinsmore, 1985; Nunan, 1987) suggest that it is the IRF/IRE cycle which is primarily responsible for traditional patterns of interaction. However, the analysis of extract 2.2 shows that the interaction is not necessarily completely closed with the IRF/IRE cycle. A variable approach to context is therefore necessary for a valid and adequate description of L2 classroom interaction. A focus on superficially isolable, identifiable and quantifiable features such as the IRF/IRE cycle, display questions etc. will inevitably result in monolithic and acontextual overgeneralisations. From the analysis of extracts 2.1 and 2.2 we may conclude the following. The identification of the IRF/IRE cycle (or any other quasi-syntactic DA category) in isolation does not elucidate the nature, interest and orientation of the interaction. The DA approach is inherently acontextual and is unable to portray the different contexts and the different focuses of the interaction. The discussion reveals the need for a variable conception of context, which is discussed further in sections 1.3 and 1.6. A basic problem with the DA approach is that it portrays teachers as making one pedagogical action on one level at a time. The analysis of extract 2.2 shows that teachers may be simultaneously orienting to multiple separate pedagogical concerns and that classroom interaction may be operating simultaneously on multiple levels.

The focus and context of the interaction may switch with great fluidity. Halliday (1985, p. xxxiv) suggests that “The context of spoken language is in a constant state of flux, and the language has to be mobile and alert ... The complexity of spoken language is more like that of a dance; it is not static and dense but mobile and intricate.” I have tried to show that DA cannot portray the flow of the interaction because it is essentially a static approach which portrays interaction as consisting of fixed and unidimensional coordinates on a conceptual map. Since the DA approach was developed for L1 classrooms and transferred for use in L2 classrooms, it has difficulty in portraying the extra dimension which distinguishes L2 classroom interaction from L1 classroom interaction. As Willis (1992, p. 162) puts it, “Language is used for two purposes; it serves both as the subject matter of the lesson, and as the medium of instruction. It is precisely this dual role that makes language lessons difficult to describe.” Some coding schemes have tried to adapt the DA approach to the L2 classroom. In order to try to make the DA approach cope with these two different levels of language use, Willis (1992, p. 163) proposes coding on either an inner or an outer level: “The ‘Outer’ structure is a mechanism for controlling and stimulating utterances in the ‘Inner’ structure which gives formal practice in the foreign language.” However, this still implies that an utterance is either being used on one level or another, whereas I have demonstrated in my analysis of extract 2.2 that utterances often operate on both levels simultaneously.

The DA approach massively oversimplifies the interaction in extract 2.2 and, I would argue that it has in general to do so in order to make the DA system work. The micro-interaction has to be coded as a single instructional sequence (Mehan, 1979) or as a single move (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975) in order that the micro-interaction can be fitted into the hierarchy. In contrast to DA, the CA analysis of extract 2.2 was better able to capture the dynamic, fluid, complex interplay and dialectic between the different levels on which the L2 classroom operates and hence
portray the complexity of the teacher’s interactional work. Because the focus in DA is on fitting the micro-interaction into a system, whereas the focus in CA is on portraying the participants’ interactional concerns, DA tends to conceal the complexity of the interaction and homogenise it, whereas CA tends to reveal its complexity, fluidity and dynamism.

It was suggested in the analysis of extract 2.2 that, by virtue of language being the object as well as the vehicle of instruction, L2 teachers are doing very complex interactional work compared with “content” teachers and compared with professionals in other institutional settings. Unfortunately, the DA methodology and coding schemes which have been predominantly employed to represent their work tend to portray them as plodding from one monotonous IRF cycle to the next and as working on a single level. So I feel that the DA approach we have predominantly used up till now to portray what we do in the classroom has not done sufficient justice to the complexity of the interactional work language teachers are engaged in, and that it has therefore not done sufficient justice to the profession (Seedhouse, 1998b).

So the position reached at the end of this section is that if DA is used as an isolated system, it has a great number of problems and limitations for the reasons given. However, the basis of DA, i.e. form-function mapping, forms an integral part of CA, namely the why that? part of the question why that, in that way, right now? We can see how this integration of DA into CA would work in the CA analysis of extract 2.2. Form-function mapping or speech move DA analysis is certainly undertaken, but it forms only a part of a much broader perspective which concentrates on the relationship between pedagogical focus and the organisation of the interaction, in particular the organisation of turns, sequence, repair and topic. So a CA institutional discourse approach to L2 classroom interaction is very much founded on and compatible with the many studies of L2 classrooms undertaken in a DA paradigm. The CA approach is, however, able to take the exploration much further and create more connections with social and institutional context. Most importantly, CA is able to portray the reflexive relationship between pedagogy and interaction whereas DA is not.

1.2 The Communicative Approach to L2 Classroom Interaction

In the previous section, DA was reviewed as an example of an interactional approach to L2 classroom interaction. In this section, I review the Communicative Approach as an example of a pedagogical approach to L2 classroom interaction. Although one might have expected the communicative approach to have adopted a complex and sophisticated perspective on communication in the L2 classroom, this section argues that in fact the communicative approach has, most surprisingly, adopted a monolithic, static and invariant perspective on classroom interaction. Moreover, the communicative perspective on L2 classroom interaction is not based on any communication or sociolinguistic theory, but rather on a single, invariant pedagogical concept. However, it should be pointed out at the outset that there is no intended criticism of the value of the communicative approach to language teaching as such but rather of its perspective on classroom interaction and the analyses produced. I would first like to examine the elements which constitute the communicative position on L2 classroom interaction and then review communicative analyses of L2 classroom interaction. In the late 1980s a communicative tradition developed which saw much traditional L2 classroom communication as undesirable by comparison with "genuine" or "natural communication". Nunan (1987, p. 137), for
example, examined five exemplary communicative language lessons and found that they resembled traditional patterns of classroom interaction rather than genuine interaction. Nunan sums up the results of the research so far:

There is a growing body of classroom-based research which supports the conclusion drawn here, that there are comparatively few opportunities for genuine communicative language use in second-language classrooms… A disconfirming study is yet to be documented. (Nunan, 1987, p. 141)

Kumaravadivelu (1993, p. 12) confirms that this tradition was still prevalent in the 1990s: “Research studies ... show that even teachers who are committed to communicative language teaching can fail to create opportunities for genuine interaction in the language classroom”. The main assumptions of this tradition can be summarised as follows:

(1) There is such a thing as genuine or natural communication (Nunan, 1987, p. 137; Kumaravadivelu, 1993, p. 12; Kramsch, 1981, p. 8).
(2) It is possible for L2 teachers to replicate genuine or natural communication in the classroom, but most teachers fail to do so (Nunan, 1987, p. 144; Kumaravadivelu, 1993, p. 12; Kramsch, 1981, p. 18; Legutke and Thomas, 1991, p. 8).
(3) Most teachers instead produce interaction which features display questions and examples of the IRF cycle, which are typical of traditional classroom interaction, and which rarely occur in genuine interaction (Nunan, 1987, p. 141; Nunan, 1988, p. 139; Dinsmore, 1985, pp. 226-227; Long and Sato, 1983, p. 284).
(4) Teachers could be trained to replicate genuine or natural communication in the classroom (Nunan, 1987, p. 144; Kumaravadivelu, 1993, p. 18).

I will now examine each element of this tradition and attempt to reveal the problems inherent in the underlying assumptions.

Assumption 1. There is such a thing as "genuine" or "natural" communication.

The terms genuine and natural communication, as used by the communicative tradition, are not precise sociolinguistic or discoursal terms. Many writers have used the terms genuine or natural without attempting to define or characterise them. Nunan, however, does provide a characterisation of genuine communication. He suggests that genuine communication is characterised by the uneven distribution of information, the negotiation of meaning (through, for example, clarification requests and confirmation checks), topic nomination and negotiation by more than one speaker, and the right of interlocutors to decide whether to contribute to an interaction or not. In other words, in genuine communication, decisions about who says what to whom and when are up for grabs. (Nunan, 1987, p. 137)

Although Nunan does not actually say that he is characterising ordinary conversation, the above is a short characterisation of ordinary conversation within the CA paradigm. In CA terms, his last sentence clearly implies 100% local allocational
means, which can only mean conversation rather than any other speech exchange system, all of which use greater pre-allocation. (Sacks et al., 1974, p. 729). Other authors reinforce the point that what is actually meant by genuine or natural discourse is in fact conversation. Kramsch (1981, p. 17) explicitly equates natural discourse with conversation, whilst Ellis (1992, p. 38) equates naturalistic discourse with conversation. The communicative tradition, then, equates genuine or natural communication with ordinary conversation, which is a CA term (as well as a lay term). I will use only the term ordinary conversation from now on. The clear implication in the communicative tradition is that it is possible for conversation to be produced within the setting of an L2 classroom lesson, and indeed this looks perfectly reasonable at first sight. However, CA sees conversation as a benchmark against which institutional varieties can be described and recognised (Drew and Heritage 1992b, p. 19).

Conversation, then, is clearly differentiated from the numerous varieties of institutional discourse. If we rephrase the implication in sociolinguistic terms, then, it begins to look unreasonable; the clear implication in the communicative tradition is that it is possible for conversation (a non-institutional form of discourse) to be produced within the setting of an L2 classroom lesson (within an institutional form of discourse). We should also note at this point that there is no basis in communication or sociolinguistic theory for characterising one variety of discourse as more genuine or natural than another, with the exception of scripted interaction typical of films and TV programmes. The concept of interaction in the classroom being not genuine or natural and that outside the classroom being genuine and natural is a purely pedagogical one.

Assumption 2. It is possible for L2 teachers to replicate conversation in the classroom, but most teachers fail to do so.

I will now argue that it is, in theory, not possible for L2 teachers to replicate conversation (in its CA sense) in the L2 classroom as part of a lesson. Warren (1993) is based on a corpus of 40 recordings of ordinary conversation (totalling 25,000 words) in natural settings. Warren develops a precise and consensual definition of conversation which distinguishes it from other discourse types:

A speech event outside of an institutionalised setting involving at least two participants who share responsibility for the progress and outcome of an impromptu and unmarked verbal encounter consisting of more than a ritualised exchange (italics added) (Warren, 1993, p. 8).

For L2 classroom interaction to be equivalent to ordinary conversation, the following features of naturalness in conversation (paraphrasing Warren) would have to be met: the setting must not be an institutional one; turn-taking and participation rights in conversation must be unrestricted; responsibility for managing and monitoring the progress of the discourse must be shared by all participants (see also Edwards and Westgate, 1994, p. 116). Conversations are open-ended and participants jointly negotiate the topic and the language/dialect in which the conversation is conducted. The only way, therefore, in which an L2 lesson could become identical to conversation would be for the learners to regard the teacher as a fellow-conversationalist of equal status rather than as a teacher, for the teacher not to
direct the discourse in any way at all, and for the setting to be non-institutional; no institutional purposes could shape the discourse, in other words.

The stated purpose of L2 institutions is to teach the L2 to foreigners. As soon as the teacher instructs the learners to have a conversation in the L2, the institutional context is talked into being (see section Error! Reference source not found.), and the interaction could not be conversation as defined here. To replicate conversation, the L2 lesson would therefore have to cease to be an L2 lesson in any understood sense of the term (Van Lier, 1988b, p. 267) and become a conversation which did not have any underlying pedagogical purpose, which was not about the L2 or even, in most situations, in the L2. Van Lier underlines the point that the communicative approach would in effect like L2 classrooms to stop being L2 classrooms.

It is not suggested that it is impossible for ordinary conversation in the CA sense to take place in the physical setting of an L2 classroom, but rather that it cannot occur as part of an L2 lesson. In the vast majority of L2 classrooms around the worlds, the learners share the same L1. The only conceivable way in which conversation could occur in these monolingual L2 classrooms would be for the learners to converse in their L1. In multilingual ELT classrooms, which are frequently found in the UK and the USA, it would be quite natural for learners to use English (their L2) to have a conversation. See Markee (in press) for an example of students switching between a private conversation and L2 classroom business. In order for it to be a conversation, however, the teacher would not be able to suggest the topic of the discourse or direct it in any way. Such a conversation might just as well take place in the coffee bar as in the L2 classroom. It is therefore impossible, in theory, for L2 teachers to produce conversation (in the CA sense) in the classroom as part of a lesson. I will attempt to demonstrate that this is also impossible in practice during the discussion of Assumption 4).

Assumption 3. Most teachers instead produce interaction which features display questions and examples of the IRF/IRE cycle, which are typical of traditional classroom interaction, and which are rarely found in conversation.

Both Nunan (1987, p. 137) and Dinsmore (1985, p. 226) give the presence of the IRF/IRE cycle as their initial reason for asserting that there was little genuine communication in the L2 classrooms which they observed. Dinsmore claims that the prevalence of the IRF cycle and the unequal power distribution “hardly seems compatible with a ‘communicative’ language teaching methodology.” (1985, p. 227). Nunan writes that

On the surface, the lessons appeared to conform to the sorts of communicative principles advocated in the literature. However, when the patterns of interaction were examined more closely, they resembled traditional patterns of classroom interaction rather than genuine interaction. Thus, the most commonly occurring pattern of interaction was (IRF). (Nunan, 1987, p. 137)

I made the point in the analysis of extract 2.1 that interaction featuring the IRF/IRE cycle can be dynamic, fluid and offer the learner some interactional space, but that the DA methodology cannot reveal this. Now the problem is that a focus on identifying IRF/IRE cycles tends to be self-fulfilling and limiting and to blind analysts to other aspects of the interaction. Dinsmore (1985, p. 226) actually decided to search
for this exchange structure before examining his data: “I had predicted that the basic exchange structure ... would not be so prevalent in the adult EFL classes I observed.” I would now like to suggest that there is a fundamental problem with the communicative approach’s assumption that, because the IRF/IRE cycle is normally noticeably absent from adult-adult conversation, it is therefore unnatural and should not occur in the L2 classroom either. It is important to note that the IRF/IRE cycle is very noticeably present in a particular discourse setting outside the classroom, namely in the home in parent-child interaction. Examples of the IRF/IRE cycle are to be found in virtually every published collection of transcripts of parent-child conversation, e.g. Maclure and French (1981, p. 211); Painter (1989, p. 38); Peccei (1994, p. 83). The interactional structure cannot be differentiated from that which takes place in the L2 classroom, for example:

Extract 2.3

(Mother and Kevin look at pictures)

Mother: and what are those?
Kevin: shells.
Mother: shells, yes. you’ve got some shells, haven’t you?
what’s that?
Kevin: milk.

(Harris and Coltheart, 1986, p. 50)

It appears that critics of the IRF/IRE cycle in L2 learning contexts have failed to notice the significant role it plays in L1 learning in a home environment. Ellis (1992, p. 37) reports that much SLA research is based on the assumption that classroom L2 acquisition will be most successful if opportunities are created for learners to engage in interactions of the kind experienced by children acquiring their L1. Given the prominence of the IRF/IRE cycle in parent-child interaction, one might therefore have expected communicative theorists to be actively promoting the use of the IRF/IRE cycle rather than attempting to banish it. A CA institutional discourse approach (Drew and Heritage, 1992b, p. 41) would attempt to account for the fact that the IRF/IRE cycle is prevalent in the classroom and parent-child interaction but rare in conversation in the following way. In the classroom and parent-child interaction the core goal is learning or education, and the IRF/IRE cycle is an interactional feature which is well suited to this core goal (see section Error! Reference source not found.). The business of learning is accomplished through the interactional feature.

Display questions have come in for the same type of criticism from the communicative approach as the IRF/IRE cycle. Nunan (1988, p. 139) states that one of the characteristics of genuine communication is the use of referential questions, and that one of the reasons the patterns of interaction in the lessons he observed are non-communicative is that the questions are almost exclusively of the display type. Nunan’s (1987, p. 142) conclusion was that “Increasing the use of referential questions over display questions is likely to stimulate a greater quantity of genuine classroom interaction.” Research within a broad SLA/communicative paradigm by Long and Sato (1983), Pica and Long (1986), Brock (1986) and Kramsch (1985) also suggests that an increased use of referential rather than display questions is likely to
be create more genuine interaction and therefore be more beneficial to second language acquisition.

ESL teachers continue to emphasize form over meaning, accuracy over communication. This is illustrated, for example, by the preference for display over referential questions, and results in classroom NS-NNS conversation which differs greatly from its counterpart outside... Indeed, on this evidence, NS-NNS conversation during SL instruction is a greatly distorted version of its equivalent in the real world. (Long and Sato, 1983, pp. 283-4)

As was the case with the IRF/IRE cycle, there are many problems with this communicative analysis of display questions. The same arguments which were used above concerning the IRF/IRE cycle apply equally to the use of display questions. As with the IRF/IRE cycle, display questions “are also very common in adult-child talk in the pre-school years.” (Maclure and French, 1981, p. 211). Display questions are very common in virtually every collection of transcripts of parent-child conversation, as in the extract below:

Extract 2.4

(Mother and Hal (aged 19 months) are reading)
Mother: what’s this Hal?
Hal: bunny
Mother: yes. bunny’s sleeping.

(Painter, 1989, p. 38)

From a CA institutional discourse perspective, then, both the IRF/IRE cycle and display questions are interactional features which are appropriate to the core goals of education and learning, whether at home (learning an L1) or in the L2 classroom (learning an L2). The IRF/IRE cycle and display questions seem not to be interactional features which are specific to a particular culture or age; they appear to be universal phenomena in education and learning contexts. The following quotation is from a fourth century Buddhist scripture and shows an example of the IRF/IRE cycle combined with a display question in a learning context which is identical in interactional terms to examples found in twenty-first century classrooms:

The Lord asked Subhuti: What do you think, was there any dharma which awoke the Tathagata, when he was with the Tathagata Dipankara to the utmost, right, and perfect enlightenment?
Subhuti replied: As I understand the meaning of the Lord’s teaching, this was not due to any dharma.
The Lord said: So it is, Subhuti, so it is. (Conze, 1959: 164)

The point to be made in this section of the analysis, then, is that individual interactional features have to be understood in the interactional and institutional environment in which they are embedded.
Assumption 4. Teachers could be trained to replicate conversation in the L2 classroom.

I argued in the discussion of Assumption 2 that it is in theory impossible for L2 teachers to replicate conversation in the L2 classroom as part of a lesson. It follows that it is not possible to train teachers to do so. However, I would now like to examine a classroom extract in which the teacher has succeeded in replicating interaction which is ostensibly as close to conversation as possible. I will then attempt to demonstrate that it is not in fact conversation (if we are to use precise sociolinguistic terms) but L2 classroom discourse. The teacher does not take part in the interaction, in which teenage girl learners (in a state secondary school in rural Malaysia) are discussing fashion photographs in a group.

Extract 2.5

1 L1: I like this fashion because I can wear it for: sleep! not to go anywhere.
2 L2: ooh:!
3 L3: I like this fashion.
4 L2: I like this.
5 L4: why?
6 L5: I like this.
7 L2: because: be [ cause:, ]
8 L1: [ the girl,]
9 LL: (laugh)
10 L4: this is good this fashion.
11 L2: this is a beautiful skirt.
12 L1: (. ) beautiful, (. ) but when I: done it [ I put it long: long ]
13 L4: [this one better than] that one.
14 L4: (5.0) who like this one?
13 L1: aah, I like this.

(Warren, 1985, p. 223)

The interaction seems highly communicative and the interaction corresponds neatly (on the surface) to Nunan’s characterisation of genuine communication or conversation (see the discussion of Assumption 1). The point is, however, that the linguistic forms and patterns the learners produced were directly related to the pedagogical focus which the teacher introduced, even though the teacher did not participate in the interaction. Warren states clearly what his pedagogical focus was with these learners. A collection of women’s fashion photographs was selected in order to engage the interest of the students, who were left alone with a tape recorder. The writer devised the activity “to stimulate natural discourse in the classroom.” (1985, p. 45) and “The only instruction was that the students should look at the photographs and that anything they might say had to be in English.” (p. 47). Warren hoped that the exercise “might lead to the voicing of likes and dislikes.” (p. 45). We can clearly see the link between the teacher’s pedagogical focus and the linguistic forms and patterns of interaction produced by the learners; the learners speak only in English, discuss the photographs and express likes and dislikes. The learners are orienting to the teacher’s pedagogical focus even in his absence.
Occasionally the way in which the participants are orienting to external constraints and the teacher’s agenda becomes visible in the linguistic forms which the learners choose. For example, in the above extract the teacher hopes that the exercise might lead to the voicing of likes and dislikes. Four out of the first six utterances of the above extract begin with “I like this”, which is more reminiscent of free practice work in the L2 classroom than of ordinary conversation. The details of the interaction, then, demonstrate an orientation to the teacher's pedagogical focus and to the institutional goal. For the interaction to have been conversation, the teacher could not have influenced the topic of conversation in any way or even required the learners to speak in English. My point is, then, that whatever methods the teacher is using - and even if the teacher claims to be relinquishing control of the classroom interaction - the linguistic forms and patterns of interaction which the learners produce will normally and normatively be linked in some way to the pedagogical focus which the teacher introduces into the L2 classroom environment (see section Error! Reference source not found.). So although the above extract appears superficially to resemble characterisations of conversation, when it is seen in context it is a clear example of institutional interaction. As soon as the teacher gives the learners any instructions (even if the instruction is to have a conversation in the L2), the resultant interaction will be institutional discourse and not conversation.

The above analysis has revealed the fundamental problems and paradoxes inherent in any approach which compares typical L2 classroom discourse unfavourably with conversation or any other variety of discourse. Classroom communication is a variety of institutional discourse like any other, and has not been regarded as inferior or less "real" by sociolinguists; rather the opposite. When Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) wanted to gather data to build a model for discourse analysis, they chose to record classroom communication, and one of the reasons which they give is quite revealing: “We also wanted a situation where all participants were genuinely trying to communicate” (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975, p. 6). Hymes (1972a) wrote that “studying language in the classroom is not really ‘applied’ linguistics; it is really basic research. Progress in understanding language in the classroom is progress in linguistic theory.” There is simply no basis or mechanism in sociolinguistics or communication theory for evaluating one variety of discourse as better, more genuine or more natural than another; the concept is a purely pedagogical one. A very fundamental problem with the communicative tradition was the belief that it was possible to apply concepts derived from pedagogy (“genuine” and “natural”) to interaction.

Having suggested that there are theoretical problems with this approach, I will now attempt to show how these result in practical problems in the analysis of interaction by examining possibly the most influential communicative study of L2 classroom interaction (Nunan 1987, 1988). Again, this will serve as an exemplar of the problems inherent in analysing interaction on the basis of pedagogy and pedagogical concepts alone. Nunan (1987, p. 137) begins his study by providing a characterisation of genuine communication (reproduced in the previous section). It is against this characterisation of genuine communication, a single and invariant criterion, that Nunan compares his recorded classroom interaction data and finds them wanting. Nunan (1987, p. 137) presents the presence of the IRF/IRE cycle as his initial reason for asserting that there was little genuine communication in the language classrooms observed. Nunan then examines a transcript of a teacher introducing the class to the information-gap activity which comes later in the lesson:
Extract 2.6

T: today, er, we’re going to um, we’re going to do something where, we, er, listen to a conversation and we also talk about the subject of the conversation er, in fact, we’re not going to listen to one conversation, how many conversations are we going to listen to?

L: three

T: how do you know?

L: because, er, you will need, er, three tapes and three points

T: three?

L: points

T: what?

L: power points

T: power points, if I need three power points and three tape recorders, you correctly assume that Im going to give you three conversations, and that’s true, and all the conversation will be different, but they will all be on the same (.)?

LL: subject, subject

T: the same (.)?

L: subject, subject

T: right, they will all be on the same subject

(Nunan, 1988, p. 139)

Nunan’s main point in relation to the above extract is that “The teacher is firmly in control of who says what when ... the exchanges are essentially non-communicative, despite the best intentions of the teacher.” (Nunan, 1988, p. 140). However, as he says, “The teacher is introducing the class to the information-gap activity” (Nunan, 1988, p. 139). We are in a procedural context. The teacher’s pedagogical focus at this moment is to give procedural information as well as to set the scene for the main activity. The teacher’s pedagogical focus at this moment is not on producing genuine communication; that may come in the subsequent information gap. I am suggesting, then, that it is unfair to evaluate the extract as if it had been the teacher’s intention to produce genuine communication.

By contrast, in extract 2.5 above it is actually the teacher’s stated intention to produce genuine communication, and in such cases Nunan’s evaluatory criterion would be perfectly applicable. The CA methodology which will be outlined in section Error! Reference source not found. suggests that the analyst should analyse and evaluate the extract according to participants’ own orientations, i.e. by matching the pedagogical focus to the resultant patterns of interaction. In the above procedural context the teacher is asking display questions instead of transmitting procedural information in a monologue in order to involve and interest the learners in the activity and maximise motivation. S/he is maximising the potential for interaction in that particular stage of the lesson. It is not legitimate to compare the above transcript with information-gaps or ordinary conversation, but it would be legitimate to compare it with other transcripts of procedural contexts. In my database (see section 1.4), the vast majority of transcripts of procedural contexts show the teacher delivering a monologue (see, for example, extract 3.12). Therefore, the above transcript appears to be maximally communicative and interactive for the context it is operating in. The learners appear to validate the interaction by contributing energetically, there is a match between the
teacher’s pedagogical focus and the resultant patterns of interaction, and the extract should therefore be evaluated very positively in its own terms.

This analysis shows that it is easy for analysts using etic and acontextual approaches to impose their own, extraneous concerns onto the interaction; however, the CA methodology outlined in section Error! Reference source not found. should help ensure an emic analysis focused on the participants’ concerns and perspectives. It is essential, then, in order for fair evaluation to take place, that the pedagogical focus should be related to the linguistic forms and patterns of interaction which the learners produce.

To put the above criticisms into context, no fundamental objections have been raised in relation to the communicative approach to language teaching. The criticisms relate solely to its perspective on and analyses of classroom interaction. In order to justify the need for a contextual and variable CA approach to L2 classroom interaction which is able to portray the reflexive relationship between pedagogy and interaction, it has first proved necessary to demonstrate the problems inherent in approaches which are based solely on pedagogical concepts. It is also necessary to be clear that the fact that L2 teaching is currently operating within a broadly communicative paradigm does not mean that L2 teaching is based on a sound and sophisticated perspective on communication in the L2 classroom. Although we have looked specifically at the communicative approach to L2 classroom interaction in this section, we may consider it as an example of a purely pedagogical approach to interaction.

The DA and communicative perspectives reviewed so far are in one sense at opposite ends of a methodological continuum in that DA provides a purely interactional perspective and the communicative approach a purely pedagogical perspective on L2 classroom interaction. In that sense they have been analysed as exemplars of interactional and pedagogical approaches at different ends of a continuum. However, from another perspective they are very similar in that they both operate invariant and acontextual perspectives; they both view all varieties of L2 classroom interaction from the same viewpoint. They both operate an etic perspective and have no way of portraying the participants' emic perspectives.

### 1.3 Dynamic and Variable Approaches to Classroom Interaction

By contrast to the acontextual approaches reviewed so far, a number of researchers in both L1 and L2 classrooms have been developing a dynamic and variable approach to classroom interaction which recognises different varieties of classroom interaction. A dynamic and variable approach to context is typical of contemporary sociolinguistics (Heritage, 1984b) and of the ethnography of communication (Saville-Troike, 1989; Gumperz and Hymes, 1986). Research by Judith Green and associates (e.g., Green and Wallat, 1981) has shown that the concept of variable context is applicable to L1 classrooms.

In the L2 classroom, at least five writers have recently proposed that L2 classroom interaction is best understood as divisible into several distinct varieties. This may be seen as a movement towards a variable and contextual perspective on L2 classroom interaction. Van Lier (1982, 1988a) is concerned with establishing a variable and contextual approach and the overall goal of his studies is an understanding of what goes on in L2 classrooms (Van Lier, 1988a:14). He asserts that different varieties of interaction occur in the L2 classroom, that these are a result of a
different focus on activity or topic and (p. 156) identifies four different types of L2 classroom interaction as follows:

**Interaction type 1.** Less topic-orientation, less activity-orientation.

**Interaction type 2.** More topic-orientation, less activity-orientation.

**Interaction type 3.** More topic-orientation, more activity-orientation.

**Interaction type 4.** Less topic-orientation, more activity-orientation.

Ellis (1984) identifies five different types of L2 classroom interaction:

1) *Interaction with medium-centred goals:*

2) *Interaction with message-centred goals:

3) *Interaction with activity-centred goals:

4) *Interaction involving framework goals:

5) *Interaction involving social goals:

Tsui (1987, p. 345) identifies three different types of L2 classroom interaction:

1) *Negotiating:

2) *Non-negotiating: matching:

3) *Non-negotiating: direct-verbal:

Abdesslem (1993) identifies four frames in L2 classroom discourse:

Frame 1. *Saying the linguistic form of the Foreign Language:

Frame 2. *Talking in the Foreign Language:

Frame 3. *Transacting in the Foreign Language:

Frame 4. *Interacting in the Foreign Language:

Hasan (1988, p. 136) identifies five types of interaction in and beyond the EFL classroom:

Type 1. *Formal Interview

Type 2. *Formal Classroom Interaction

Type 3. *Informal Classroom Interaction

Type 4. *Informal Classroom Discussion

Type 5. *Informal Conversation

There appears to be a reasonable level of consensus at present that different varieties of communication do occur in the L2 classroom. However, we do need to observe that five different writers have looked at the same type of data, namely L2 classroom interaction, and have produced five different descriptive systems. This is not to suggest that there are no points of convergence; there clearly are many similarities. However, if we focus on the differences, we find that the names of the varieties are different in every case, the glosses (not reproduced here) are different, and the writers do not agree on how many varieties there are. We saw that five writers used slightly different terms to denote the different varieties: types of interaction (Hasan), interaction types (Van Lier), frames (Abdesslem), types of interaction (Tsui), interactions (Ellis).

There would be advantages to using the term *L2 classroom context* to denote those sub-varieties or types of interaction which occur in L2 classrooms; the concept is developed in section Error! Reference source not found.. Using the term *context* would enable the research to be connected with the body of sociolinguistic work on context which exists (including Green’s), whilst including *L2 classroom* in the term both narrows the scope and indicates that we are dealing with an institutional *discourse*
variety. In section Error! Reference source not found. there will be a presentation of the broader perspective on context adopted in this study, and it should merely be noted here that the adoption of the term context in this study will facilitate the development of this broader perspective. The adoption of the term context should not be taken to imply that this is the only conception of context relevant to L2 classrooms. We will see as the argument develops that a very complex conception of context is necessary.

1.4 Database Issues

In general CA studies rarely provide a detailed description of the database on which they are founded. Previous studies of L2 classroom interaction have often provided minimal information on their database. In this monograph, however, such a description is provided for the following reasons. The overall aim is to produce a model and methodology for the analysis of L2 classroom interaction, whatever the setting. However, as Van Lier (1988a, p. 5) puts it, “One of the problems with L2 classroom research is that there is such a tremendous variety of L2 classrooms.” The size, nature and variety of the database should also be of interest to researchers, and to L2 teachers in particular in determining the generalisability of the study and its applicability to the reader’s own professional context. Elsewhere (Seedhouse, 1995) I have argued 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 background contextual factors, in order that the diversity of the database 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. In this section a brief description of the database underlying the present study is provided. There then follows a discussion of issues relating to databases in general. The database on which this study relies is made up of seven distinct databases.
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Number of Database</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>4</th>
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<th>6</th>
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<td>Title of Database</td>
<td>Seedhouse’s Norway Data</td>
<td>Transcript collection</td>
<td>Peck’s European data</td>
<td>Seedhouse’s UK data</td>
<td>Seedhouse’s China data</td>
<td>Yazigi’s Abu Dhabi data</td>
<td>Ellis, Basturkmen &amp; Loewen’s New Zealand Database</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of lessons or fragments</td>
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<td>350 lessons or fragments</td>
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<td>8 different L2s</td>
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<td>French, English</td>
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<td>English and a variety of European and Asian languages</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Mostly Arabic, also Persian, Chinese, English</td>
<td>A variety of Asian and European languages</td>
</tr>
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<td>Both</td>
<td>Monolingual</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Monolingual</td>
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<td>Many</td>
<td>Western European</td>
<td>Western and Asian</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Mostly Arabic</td>
<td>Mostly Asian, some Western</td>
</tr>
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<td>Country of origin</td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>14 different countries</td>
<td>France, Germany, Denmark, Spain</td>
<td>England and a variety of European and Asian countries</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Mostly Middle Eastern states, also Iran, Argentina, USA, Australia, Senegal and Algeria</td>
<td>Japan, Korea, China, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Also Western Europe and South America</td>
</tr>
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<td>Young children to adults</td>
<td>Adult</td>
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<td>6-8</td>
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<td>Wide range</td>
<td>State schools, private language schools</td>
<td>University and further education college</td>
<td>Primary schools</td>
<td>Primary international school</td>
<td>Private language school</td>
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<td>Beginners to advanced</td>
<td>Beginners to advanced</td>
<td>Beginners to upper intermediate</td>
<td>Beginners to intermediate</td>
<td>Beginners to intermediate</td>
<td>Pre-intermediate to upper-intermediate</td>
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1.5 Adequacy of Databases for the Study of L2 Classroom Interaction

Banbrook and Skehan (1989, p. 147) point out that classroom research has not addressed the issue of how one could justify one’s sampling base and suggest that there is an urgent need for guidelines. In this section I address issues relating to databases supporting L2 classroom research in general and consider the adequacy of the database on which this study is founded. If one were operating in a quantitative, etic paradigm, one might relate the size of the current database with those of other, similar studies to consider what previous researchers have considered an adequate size of sample for their classroom research. It is essential in each case, however, to relate the size and nature of the database to the researcher’s stated research aims and methodology.

One of the best-known studies of L1 classroom interaction, Mehan (1979) has as its goal the location of “The organizing machinery of classroom lessons in the interaction.” (Mehan, 1979, p. 23). The goal, then, is fairly similar to that of this study, except that Mehan deals with L1 rather than L2 classrooms. Mehan’s study is based on a corpus of nine lessons involving the same teacher, an academic on a sabbatical placement in a school. Mehan uses an ethnographic methodology together with a classic DA system. In relation to the L2 classroom, Van Lier’s (1982) PhD and book (1988a) are based on 9 lessons recorded in Great Britain and the USA with Venezulalan, Dutch and Mexican learners, with data added to sporadically from other sources. Van Lier states that his overall aim is an understanding of what goes on in L2 classrooms (1988a, p. 14), and this aim is not dissimilar to that of the present study. He uses a hybrid ethnographic methodology, although he uses the terminology of CA in Chapters 5-7. The aim of Johnson (1995) in a book length study is to “enable teachers to recognize how the patterns of communication are established and maintained in second language classrooms” (1995, p. 3) and to develop a framework for understanding communication in second language classrooms. The goal, then, is reasonably similar to that of this study. Although Johnson includes numerous extracts from L2 classroom transcripts in her book, she does not make explicit the size or nature of her database. The study is based on a model of communication for L1 classrooms created by Barnes et al. (1990).

Mitchell’s (1986) PhD thesis is based on 2 sets of audiorecorded French lessons from Scottish secondary schools. The first set consists of 13 lessons (1986, p. 129) and the second set consists of a selection from an unspecified number of lessons. The aim of the study was to investigate the capacity of foreign language teachers to make the L2 the sole or main means of communicating with pupils. I was not able to find an explicit statement concerning methodology. Hasan (1988, p. 95) states that the corpus for his PhD thesis consists of 5 recordings of interaction lasting 35 minutes each, comprising audio and video data which were then transcribed. 15 Arabic speaking Algerian postgraduate students at a British university were recorded together with four native speakers. The aim of the research was to investigate the discourse variability exhibited by classroom participants (1988:2). Hasan (1988, p. 53) describes his methodology as a “discourse analysis approach which takes both quantitative and qualitative procedures into consideration.” Abdesslem’s (1987) PhD thesis is based on 8 English lessons obtained in Tunisian secondary schools. The aim is to discern the regularities in English lesson discourses in Tunisian secondary schools. (1993, p. 227). The methodology used appears to be an attempt to blend DA and CA approaches (1993, p. 224). Journal articles have drawn general conclusions

It seems, then, 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 recent studies have not stipulated the exact size of their underlying database. Having compared the database underlying this study with those underlying similar studies, the following conclusions could be drawn. The size of the current database is specified in relatively explicit terms and is considerably larger than those on which similar studies have been based. The nature and variety of the current database is also specified in relatively explicit terms and this database is considerably more varied than those on which similar studies have been based.

It should be noted at this point that I have been diverging a standard CA approach in this section. CA operates within a qualitative and emic paradigm and CA proceeds by “case by case analysis of singular exhibits of interactional conduct” (Heritage, 1995) and thereby uncovers the underlying machinery or organisation of the interaction. The CA perspective, then, is that the validity of the study is primarily related to the quality of the analysis rather than the size of the database. Hence, CA studies typically do not provide detailed information about databases. However, since one aim of this monograph is to link CA research processes to more mainstream social science research methodologies, I have tried to be as explicit about databases and procedures as possible given constraints on space.

My overall aim was produce a model and methodology which would be able to analyse L2 classroom interaction, whatever the variables; e.g. country, L2 taught, age or proficiency of students, teaching approach. In order to do this I assembled interactional data eclectically from many sources. Sometimes these data have not been transcribed to CA standards. In some cases it has been possible for me to obtain the original recorded data and re-transcribe and in other cases this has not been possible, which means that some extracts in this monograph are not presented in CA transcription. They are included because they illustrate interesting phenomena and increase the diversity of the data presented. Atkinson and Drew (1979) and Levinson (1992) also include some transcripts obtained elsewhere and not transcribed to CA standards for similar reasons.

1.6 Ethnography

One mainstream social science research methodology with which CA may create links is ethnography, which has been another popular approach to the study of L2 classroom interaction. Both approaches are qualitative and holistic and attempt to develop an emic perspective, although by different means. Recent papers (Auer, 1995; Silverman, 1999) have attempted a rapprochement between these two methodological approaches. Silverman’s basic argument is that the two approaches are compatible and may be applied to the same instances of talk provided that the crucial issue of timing is taken into account. An initial CA analysis of how participants locally produce context for their interaction can be followed by an ethnographic analysis of why questions about institutional and cultural constraints. Auer (1995, p. 427) points out that data collection procedures in ethnography are eclectic by principle and therefore incorporate CA methods. I concur with Silverman that the two approaches may be applied to the same instance of talk; the relationship should be complementary and sequential. Firstly, the details of the interaction are analysed. Interactants reveal
through the details of their talk if they are orienting to particular cultural or social issues; they actively evoke and create a social world and culture in and through their talk. As a consequence it may then become relevant to invoke social or cultural details which are extraneous to the interaction.

There have been various suggestions as to what an approach combining CA and ethnography would look like, notably Moerman's (1988, 1996) culturally contextualized CA. Seedhouse (1998a) illustrates CA's ability to analyze cultural issues by analyzing data involving a "cross-cultural" encounter between a native-speaker (NS) and non-native-speaker (NNS) of German. It is argued that the issues raised are of particular importance in L2 classrooms since cross-cultural issues and native/non-native speaker interaction are characteristic of this institutional setting. Seedhouse suggests that the data provide a clear example of participants actively evoking or talking into being their own culture or cultural frame through the details of their talk. In interaction between NSs and NNSs, the NNS's difficulty with the L2 is a type of trouble to which participants may orient in the interaction. Different participants in different contexts find different methods of coping with this trouble, and thereby evoke different cultures. In the case of the data in Seedhouse (1998a) the NS is orienting to the NNS’s trouble with the L2 by producing minimalized, pidginised interlanguage forms himself. For example the NS says “Vater kommen, ja” (“father come, yes”) (using an infinitive form of the verb) instead of “mein Vater ist gekommen, ja” (“my father came, yes”) (using a perfect form of the verb in German). The participants are creating a context of inter-cultural communication or interculture through the use of interlanguage in the details of their talk. The important methodological point here is that we initially take the interculture to be evoked and created through the use of the interlanguage. That is, we move in our analysis from the detail of the talk to the exploration of the culture (or other social construct), and we take the culture to be endogenous to the talk. To talk of a cross-cultural encounter or interculture is only relevant when it is evident that the participants orient to such a construct in the details of their talk. As Schegloff puts it:

In an interaction’s moment-to-moment development, the parties, singly and together, select and display in their conduct which of the indefinitely many aspects of context they are making relevant, or are invoking, for the immediate moment. (Schegloff, 1987, p. 219)

So for the purposes of CA analysis we do not initially take culture and cultural frames to be lurking somewhere "out there" in the background, but to be talked into being by the participants through the details of their interaction. Of course macro social structures such as culture do exist independently of talk. However, for the methodological reasons which will be outlined below, CA has found it necessary to ground the analysis, in the first instance, in the details of the talk. Seedhouse (1998a) also finds interactional evidence to support a characterization of a cross-cultural encounter in the topical development and the social actions performed. So although the participants’ talk is ostensibly about the delivery of soft drinks, it is also, on another level, about cross-cultural trouble, and this is evident again in the details of the interaction, in the types of social action which the participants perform. What a CA analysis of the extract in Seedhouse (1998a) shows us, then, is that this is an interactional sequence in which both linguistic and cultural troubles are oriented to, and in which the participants jointly create an interlanguage and interculture through the details of their talk. There is a reflexive relationship between interaction and culture here. It is the use of those particular linguistic forms, topics and types of social actions
which talk the interculture into being. From another angle, however, the interculture is
evident in the linguistic forms produced, in the topic of the talk and in the types of
social actions performed.

It must be stressed that the CA claim is not that macro social structures such as
culture or cultural frames do not exist except in the interaction. Talk is reflexively
related to context, culture and macro social structures, and talk is certainly shaped by
culture. However, the methodological imperatives detailed by Schegloff (1987, 1992)
dictate that we ground the analysis in the first instance in the details of the interaction.
The basic problem, when trying to link talk and culture, is that there is an indefinite
number of external aspects of cultural, social or personal identity or context which
could be potentially relevant to any given instance of talk-in-interaction. So it might or
might not be relevant, for example, that the NS in the data is a heterosexual male, that
he has a beard, that he is a socialist, or that he does karate. Any of these characteristics
might in principle be relevant to our analysis of the data.

What needs to be shown in an analysis, however, is which of these innumerable,
potentially relevant characteristics are actually procedurally relevant to those
participants at that moment. CA suggests that the only feasible way to do this is to start
in the details of the interaction, rather than in the external details of the culture. For
example, in Seedhouse (1998a) I showed that one particular characteristic of the
interactants’ identities is procedurally relevant to and consequential for the interaction.
This is their national or cultural identities as German and as Greek immigrant and
linguistic identities as German NS and NNS. Working from the details of the
interaction, this was shown to be procedurally relevant to the linguistic forms used, to
the topic of the talk and to the social actions performed. A cultural characteristic is only
relevant to a CA analysis if it can be shown to inhabit the details of the talk. I feel that
the CA position, as detailed above, is quite compatible with calls for culturally
contexted analysis (Moerman, 1988, 1996). There is, in principle, no limit to the
amount of background knowledge of culture, or of the number of cultural
characteristics which can be brought to bear in CA analysis. As Moerman puts it:

Contexted conversation analysis is directed towards discovering which of
the many culturally available distinctions are active and relevant to the
situation, how these distinctions are brought to bear, and what they consist
of. (Moerman, 1988, p. 70)

CA, then, can provide a secure warrant for the introduction of relevant
ethnographic information and hence a link between the micro and macro levels. The
same basic procedures could apply to an approach to the L2 classroom which combined
CA with ethnography. A CA analysis could reveal which “cultural” or contextual
aspects the participants were orienting to in the details of their talk. This would then
provide a warrant for the ethnographic description of cultural or contextual information.

An issue of recent interest (e.g. Arminen, 2000) has been the extent to which CA
analyses of institutional discourse make use of ethnographic or expert knowledge of the
institutional setting. Arminen's argument is that CA analysts inevitably do make use of
such knowledge and indeed that their analyses depend on such knowledge. It follows
that it is helpful for analysts to make as transparent as possible the extent to which their
analyses derive from the details of the interaction or from use of ethnographic or expert
knowledge. In the case of this monograph I explain in section Error! Reference source not
found. that I use three kinds of evidence. Although I work primarily from the details of
the interaction, I supplement this with two kinds of ethnographic evidence (when
available) and indicate the source of such evidence. As I worked a classroom language teacher for ten years, I invariably make use of my expert knowledge of the setting during analyses. However, any analytical claims should be based on the orientations of the participants, as evidenced in the details of the interaction.

1.7 The Pedagogical Landing-Ground Perspective

So far in this chapter I have reviewed several explicitly stated, methodologically-informed perspectives on L2 classroom interaction. By contrast, the pedagogical landing-ground perspective has, to the best of my knowledge, never been stated explicitly by anyone and has no methodological basis. Nonetheless, I will argue that it is by far the most pervasive perspective and indeed is the implicit or “default” perspective if none other is stated. The pedagogical landing-ground perspective consists of the view that intended pedagogical aims and ideas translate directly into actual classroom practice as if the L2 classroom had no intervening level of interactional organisation. In other words, the task-as-workplan or intended pedagogy translates directly into the task-in-process or actual pedagogy (Breen, 1989). Although no-one has ever explicitly expressed such a perspective on L2 classroom interaction, if one opens any L2 teaching magazine or journal or coursebook at random, one will most often find that this perspective is implicit, in that there is no consideration of how the proposed pedagogy will interface with the interactional organisation of the L2 classroom or of how the task-as-workplan will translate into the task-in-process. In other words, the conceptualisation in the literature is overwhelmingly in terms of the task-as-workplan or intended pedagogy. The pedagogical landing-ground perspective, then, is the default perspective if no consideration is given to how pedagogy is translated into interaction.

Why does this matter? The pedagogical vision of the task-as-workplan interacts with the interactional organisation of the L2 classroom to produce an L2 classroom context, which is the pedagogical focus as analysed by the participants in combination with an organisation of the interaction appropriate to that focus. To illustrate how this transformation occurs I will examine extract 2.7 below. The task-as-workplan is for L8 to ask L11 a question with the present perfect followed by a question with the simple past. This sounds fairly unproblematic in terms of task-as-workplan, especially as the teacher has just drilled the learners in the infinitive, past simple and past participle forms of the verbs involved.

Extract 2.7

1 T: “have you ever” (whispers)
2 L8: (.) you ever: (.) gone to (.)
3 T: gone to?
4 L8: er: gone to Sümela Manastır? Sümela attraction?
5 L11: (1.0) hmm yes=
6 T: =YES [(laughs ) ]
7 LL: [(laughter) ]
8 T: yes okay ask him now when? when?
9 L1: when?
10 LL: (laughter)
11 T: ( uses body language) make a sentence (laughs)
12 L1: when uhm-
13 L11: last summer
TLL: (laughter)
T: when last summer okay (laughter) okay now someone else (.) ask
him with who with who

(Üstünel, 2003, p. 75)

A problem arises with the task-in-process precisely because the task-as-workplan interacts with the interactional organisation of the L2 classroom to produce a particular sequence organisation and because the learners interpret the pedagogical focus in a different way to that intended by the teacher. There is a question-answer adjacency pair in the present perfect in lines 2, 4 and 5. The consequence is that the follow-up question in lines 9 and 12 needs only the single word *when?* to form a complete turn-constructonal unit precisely by virtue of its sequential location. So, although we can see in line 11 that T wants a full sentence with the past simple, she accepts the sequence produced (line 15). The sequence which the learners have produced is a very “natural” and understandable one and in fact their analysis of the task demonstrates a good understanding of sequential organisation. So the mismatch between task-as-workplan and task-in-process, between intended and actual pedagogy, is due to the way in which the pedagogical focus has interacted with the interactional organisation of the L2 classroom and the way in which the learners have re-interpreted the task in the light of this.

The perspective developed in this monograph is intended to replace the pedagogical landing-ground perspective. I argue that L2 classroom interaction has a specifiable organisation which transforms task-as-workplan into task-in-process, intended pedagogy into actual pedagogy. Therefore, the main focus of L2 teaching research should be on what actually happens, that is, on the task-in-process, rather than on what is intended to happen, that is, on the task-as-workplan.

### 1.8 A CA Institutional Discourse Perspective

In this monograph I adopt a CA institutional discourse perspective on L2 classroom interaction. In Chapter 1 we looked predominantly at how CA is used to analyse ordinary conversation, which has a benchmark status with respect to other varieties of interaction. Studies of institutional interaction (e.g. Drew and Heritage 1992a) have focussed on how the organisation of the interaction is related to the institutional aim and on the ways in which this organisation differs from the benchmark of ordinary conversation. Heritage (1997) proposes six basic places to probe the institutionality of interaction, namely:

- Turn-taking organization.
- Overall structural organization of the interaction.
- Sequence organization.
- Turn design.
- Lexical choice.
- Epistemological and other forms of asymmetry.

He also proposes four different kinds of asymmetry in institutional discourse:
• Asymmetries of participation, e.g. the professional asking questions to the lay client.
• Asymmetries of interactional and institutional knowhow, e.g. professionals being used to type of interaction, agenda and typical course of an interview in contrast to the lay client.
• Epistemological caution and asymmetries of knowledge, e.g. professionals often avoiding taking a firm position.
• Rights of access to knowledge, particularly professional knowledge.

We will see many of these issues surfacing in Chapters 3-5. Perhaps the most important analytical consideration is that institutional discourse displays goal orientation and rational organisation. In contrast to conversation, participants in institutional interaction orient to some “core goal, task or identity (or set of them) conventionally associated with the institution in question.” (Drew and Heritage, 1992b, p. 22). CA institutional discourse methodology attempts to relate not only the overall organisation of the interaction but also individual interactional devices to the core institutional goal. CA attempts, then, to understand the organisation of the interaction as being rationally derived from the core institutional goal. Levinson sees the structural elements of institutional discourse as Rationally and functionally adapted to the point or goal of the activity in question, that is the function or functions that members of the society see the activity as having. By taking this perspective it seems that in most cases apparently ad hoc and elaborate arrangements and constraints of very various sorts can be seen to follow from a few basic principles, in particular rational organization around a dominant goal. (Levinson, 1992, p. 71)

A related methodological precept is that one should “search for the raison d’être of a particular conversational organization, and the implications that the existence of one device has for the necessity for others.” (Levinson, 1983, p. 322). This acts as an antidote to the tendencies of researchers to consider particular interactional devices in isolation and label them desirable or undesirable for pedagogical reasons and without considering the interactional consequences of such devices or how that particular device relates to the interactional organisation of the L2 classroom as a whole. For example, we will see in section Error! Reference source not found. that current pedagogy considers the direct and overt negative evaluation of learner errors to be highly undesirable. However, it is argued that this choice creates serious new problems on the interactional level and may be counter-productive.

In Chapter 1 I described the fundamentals of CA in relation to ordinary conversation. It should be understood that in the case of institutional discourse, all of these fundamentals are in effect re-organised in relation to the institutional goal. The methodology for analysis is transformed into the next-turn-proof-procedure in relation to the institutional goal, as elaborated in section 5.3. In Chapter 5 I characterise the interactional architecture of the L2 classroom from this CA institutional discourse perspective using the principles outlined above; therefore we will not go into much detail here. However, I should note at this point that this perspective is very different in many ways to previous perspectives on L2 classroom interaction. Language teachers and researchers have often tended to present their setting as a special case, even by comparison with teachers of other subjects, because, as Willis (1992, p. 162)
puts it: “Language is used for two purposes; it serves both as the subject matter of the lesson, and as the medium of instruction. It is precisely this dual role that makes language lessons difficult to describe.” By regarding itself as a special case, L2 classroom researchers have sometimes produced perspectives on L2 classroom interaction which have had little or no connection with sociolinguistic and communication theory or education theory.

However, from a CA institutional discourse perspective, all varieties of institutional discourse have many common features (Drew & Heritage, 1992). Moreover, all institutional varieties of discourse have a unique and distinctive institutional goal and a peculiar organisation of the interaction suited to that goal. Certainly the L2 classroom does have its unique goal, which means that language is both the vehicle and object of instruction. We will see that the entire architecture is constructed around this unique goal; however, the same can be said for other institutional varieties as well. In the following chapters I apply the CA perspective on institutional discourse to the organisation of turn-taking and sequence (chapter 3) and the organisation of repair (chapter 4).

Besides the author's own publications (see bibliography), a number of CA studies of interaction involving L2 learners have revealed subtle interactional practices which transform our perceptions of L2 learners and teachers. Olsher (2004) demonstrates how L2 learners in small-group project work may complete sequential actions through gesture or embodied displays. Koshik (2002) reveals how teachers use the pedagogical practice of designedly incomplete utterances in order to initiate self-correction by learners. Carroll (2000; 2004; in press) challenges the general perception of L2 novice learners as incompetent communicators. Carroll uncovers their ability to make creative communicative use of their minimal linguistic resources and use sophisticated conversational micro-adjustments. Novice learners can precision-time their entry into interaction, recycle turn-beginnings to solicit the gaze or attention of partners and use vowel-marking as a resource for forward-oriented repair. Mori (2002) traces how a task-as-workplan (discussion with native speakers) is transformed into a task-in-process resembling a structured interview of question-answer exchanges. Markee (in press) demonstrates how learners working in pairs on a task carefully disguise their social talk from the teacher and are able to instantly switch between on-task and off-task talk. Markee (2000) portrays the progress of intersubjectivity during two tasks, one of which results in learner comprehension of the target item whilst the other does not.

1.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter stressed the importance of providing information in relation to the databases on which studies of L2 classroom interaction are founded and provided information about the database underlying this study. The chapter introduced the importance of developing a dynamic and variable perspective on L2 classroom interaction and used this as a basis for the critique of other approaches. I argued that CA is compatible with an ethnographic approach in that an initial CA analysis can provide a warrant for the introduction of relevant ethnographic information. I further argued that the DA approach is in effect one integral element of CA methodology. However, the CA perspective is quite incompatible with the communicative approach to L2 classroom interaction. The communicative approach is an example of an entirely pedagogical approach, taking the pedagogical concept of genuine interaction as its basis. At the other extreme the DA approach is an entirely interactional one and has no intrinsic means of
creating links between speech moves and pedagogy or the social and institutional levels. As we will see in Chapter 5, the unique and universal feature of the L2 classroom is the way in which pedagogy and interaction are inextricably intertwined in a reflexive relationship. Only a methodology which is able to portray this relationship at all levels of analysis (and indeed which is founded on this relationship) will be able to provide an adequate model and methodology for the analysis of L2 classroom interaction.

1 Mehan (1979) employs an ethnographic approach.
2 See the brief discussion on ‘topic’ in section 1.6.4.
3 As we will see in chapter 6, this type of repair often overlaps with the SLA conception of ‘recast’.
4 By contrast, a display question is one to which the teacher already knows the answer.
5 Warren operates within the Birmingham school of discourse analysis, rather than within CA.
6 The data have been predominantly collected from white, middle-class homes.
7 Here I am using type 1 evidence (see section 5.3) and using an extract to develop an argument, rather than for detailed CA analysis. This use of extracts occurs a number of times in the monograph and there are precedents for this in CA work, e.g. Levinson, 1992.
8 By contrast to this invariant perspective on interaction, Nunan (1988) provides a complex perspective in relation to the authenticity of materials.
9 For reasons of space it has not been possible to provide a detailed description. It is acknowledged that some of the ‘shorthand’ descriptors oversimplify complex cultural, national and linguistic issues.
10 I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out that accessibility to databases is an important issue. The transcripts of database 1 are available from the author on request, whilst databases 4 and 5 are not yet fully transcribed. The other databases do not belong to the author, whilst database 2 consists mainly of published transcripts and/or recorded data.