CHAPTER THREE

The Organisation of Turn-Taking and Sequence in Language Classrooms

In Chapter 1 I introduced the principles of CA methodology in relation to ordinary conversation, whereas chapter 2 introduced an institutional discourse perspective. In this chapter I apply these principles and this perspective to the institutional setting of the L2 classroom and to the organisation of turn-taking and sequence in particular. The overall argument of this chapter is that there is a reflexive relationship between the pedagogical focus and the organisation of turn-taking and sequence. As the pedagogical focus varies, so the organisation of the interaction varies. It is strongly argued that the data demonstrate that it is not possible to conceive of a single speech-exchange system for L2 classroom interaction. As Markee suggests, “The category of classroom talk in fact subsumes a network of inter-related speech exchange systems, whose number, organizational characteristics and acquisitional functions are as yet little understood” (Markee, 2002, p. 11). A variable perspective which conceives of multiple sub-varieties, or L2 classroom contexts, each with its own basic pedagogical focus and corresponding organisation of turn-taking and sequence, is therefore necessary.

In the L2 classroom, a particular pedagogical focus is reflexively related to a particular speech-exchange system. As the pedagogical focus varies, so the organisation of turn and sequence varies. An explanation for this phenomenon is sought in the rational design of institutional discourse, which is outlined in Chapter 5. As Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974, p. 696) put it, "turn-taking systems are characterizable as adapting to properties of the sorts of activities in which they operate." In this chapter we illustrate the main argument by reference to four different L2 classroom contexts; characterisations of other contexts may be found in Seedhouse (1996). I outline the organisation of turn-taking and sequence in form and accuracy contexts, meaning and fluency contexts, task-oriented contexts and procedural contexts¹, illustrating these with extracts from L2 lessons.

1.1 Turn-Taking and Sequence in Form and Accuracy Contexts

A pedagogical focus on linguistic form and accuracy occurs throughout the database and in all previous descriptive studies of L2 classroom interaction. With this focus, presentation and practice are typically involved; the learners learn from the teacher how to manipulate linguistic forms accurately. Personal meanings do not normally enter into the picture. The teacher expects that learners will produce precise strings of linguistic form and precise patterns of interaction which will correspond to the pedagogical focus which he/she introduces. With this tight pedagogical focus it is normally essential for the teacher to have tight control of the turn-taking system. The following interaction is from a Norwegian primary school.

Extract 3.1
Episode 1
1 T: now I want everybody (. ) to listen to me. (1.8) and when I say you are
2 going to say after me, (. ) you are going to say what I say. (. ) “we can try.”
3 T: I’ve got a lamp, a lamp. <say after me> I’ve got a lamp.
4 LL: I’ve got a lamp.
5 T: (. ) I’ve got a glass, a glass, <say after me> I’ve got a glass
6 LL: I’ve got a glass
7 T: I’ve got a vase, a vase <say after me> I’ve got a vase
8 LL: I’ve got a vase.
(39 lines omitted)

Episode 2
9 T: I’ve got a hammer. what have you got (Tjartan)?
10 L6: I have got a hammer.
11 T: can everybody say I’ve got.
12 LL: (whole class) I’ve got.
13 T: fine. I’ve got a belt. what have you got? (1.0) Kjersti?
14 L7: (. ) hmm I’ve got a telephone
(24 lines omitted)

Episode 3
15 T: and listen to me again. (. ) and look at what I’ve written(. )
16 I’ve got a hammer, <just listen now> have you got a hammer?
17 L: (1.0) yes
18 T: raise your hand up now Bjorn=
19 L13: =yes
20 T: =I’ve
21 L13: =I’ve got a hammer.
22 T: you’ve got a hammer and then you answer (1.2) yes I have (1.0) yes I
23 have. <I’ve got a belt>. have you got a belt Vegard?
24 L14: er: (.) erm no
25 T: ( . ) you are going to answer only with yes.=
26 L14: =yes=
27 T: =yes
28 L14: ( . ) I: ( . ) I have
29 T: I have. fine. I’ve got a trumpet. <have you got a trumpet Anna?>
30 L15: ah er erm “yes I have”

(Seedhouse, 1996, pp. 471-3)

The focus is clearly on form and accuracy, in that the accurate production of the modelled sentences is what the teacher requires from the students. This is evident in lines 9-14. In line 10, L6 produces an uncontracted form (“I have got”) which is linguistically correct and appropriate. However, the teacher is targeting the contracted form (“I’ve got”) and initiates repair in line 11. T has the whole class repeat the contracted form in line 12. This is to ensure that all students are aware that the contracted form is to be produced, and we can see in line 14 that L7 is able to produce the contracted form successfully. The teacher makes the nature of the speech exchange system explicit in lines 1-2. In this extract only the teacher is able to direct speakership
and the interaction follows a rigid lockstep sequence. We can see in lines 23-24 that real-world meaning does not enter into the interaction. It is evident from the video that L14 does not have a belt and therefore answers “no” when asked if he has a belt. However, the teacher requires him (in line 25) to answer “yes” in order to produce the targeted string of linguistic forms. In lines 16-22 we also see that the aim is to practise a very specific string of linguistic forms: T insists on the form “yes I have”, where “yes” on its own would be perfectly appropriate.

The focus is on the production of linguistic form, but the forms do not carry topic, content or new information in the same way as in ordinary conversation. So the term topic often does not apply to interaction in form and accuracy contexts; the participants do not develop a topic in the normal sense. This is why Kasper (1986) terms this type of interaction language-centred as opposed to content-centred. This type of exclusively form-focused or accuracy-focused classroom activity has been subject to extensive attack for decades now. The main criticisms are that there is a lack of correspondence between the forms practised and any kind of real-world meaning, that there is no scope for fluency development in such a rigid lockstep approach and the discourse is "unnatural" in that such sequences do not normally occur outside the classroom. When the pedagogical focus is exclusively on linguistic form, the organisation is necessarily formal in the way described by Drew and Heritage (1992b, p. 27) as being “strongly constrained within quite sharply defined procedures. Departures from these procedures systematically attract overt sanctions.”

We can see clear evidence of constraints on contributions. When learners make contributions which would be perfectly acceptable in conversation (lines 10 and 24) they are not accepted by the teacher. There is extreme asymmetry in terms of interactional rights; the teacher is in total control of who says what and when. The students may only speak when nominated by the teacher. They have no leeway in terms of what they say or even the linguistic forms which they may use. If they deviate even slightly from the production envisaged by the teacher, the teacher may conduct repair, as in lines 11 and 25. The extract also illustrates the point that there is plenty of variation within an extract operating within a single overall L2 classroom context and that the interaction may be further broken down into episodes. In episode 1 vocabulary revision, structure and pronunciation practice are achieved by the whole class repeating the sentences which the teacher produces whilst pointing to the picture of the object. In episode 2, T asks a standard question "What have you got?" to an individual student, who must reply "I've got a..." and then insert one of the vocabulary items. So episode 2 is practising a specific structure, pronunciation and a “slot and filler” insertion of a vocabulary item with a slight element of choice. Episode 3, by contrast, involves having individual students practicing the production of the answer "Yes, I have" as preparation for subsequent pairwork. In spite of the variations in very specific pedagogical focus and interactional organisation, the extract as a whole can be said to be typical of a form and accuracy context.

This extract illustrates the very delicate and reflexive relationship between pedagogical focus and the speech exchange system as well as the need to develop a perspective involving multiple layers of context. Every time a teacher introduces a pedagogical focus, in orientation to which learners produce turns in the L2, an L2 classroom context is talked into being. How we choose to characterise this extract varies according to the perspective we adopt. If we consider it from the broadest perspective, the extract displays homogeneity. We can observe typical features of institutional interaction and it is instantly recognisable as an instance of the interactional variety "L2 classroom interaction". If we come down to the sub-variety perspective then we can see
that the extract shows typical features of the sub-variety (or L2 classroom context) 'form and accuracy context'. A fuller discussion of the concept of L2 classroom contexts is introduced in section Error! Reference source not found.. Briefly, however, L2 classroom contexts are sub-varieties of L2 classroom interaction in which a particular pedagogical aim enters into a reflexive relationship with a particular organisation of the interaction. If we come down to the micro level we can see a great deal of variation in the episodes in terms of specific pedagogical focuses and organisations of the interaction. From this perspective the interaction is unique and heterogenous. So throughout this monograph we need to bear in mind that we are using (at least) three levels of context or ways of representing and characterising the same instance of discourse. These are not separate or competing characterisations but rather complementary ones. This tri-dimensional perspective on context is developed further in section Error! Reference source not found..

As far as sequence organisation is concerned, one might expect the IRE cycle (Initiation Reply and Evaluation) (Johnson, 1995) to predominate in the formal interaction typical of form and accuracy contexts. IRE cycles certainly do occur, but do not predominate in the database for this study. In the extract above, for example, there are only two explicitly verbalised evaluations (extract 3.1, “fine” in lines 13 and 29). So the evaluation action is decidedly optional in the database of the current study. Moreover, as we will see in section Error! Reference source not found., positive evaluations are far more common than negative ones in this context.

How do we account for the frequent absence of a verbalised evaluation? Sometimes of course the evaluation may be performed non-verbally, e.g. with a nod. However, in terms of rational organisation, I note in Chapter Five that one key interactional property of L2 classroom interaction is that everything the learners say is potentially subject to evaluation by the teacher. So in these data the learner production is always subject to teacher evaluation. If the learner production corresponds to that envisaged by the teacher, the subsequent teacher action may be a different prompt. A positive evaluation may be expressed verbally or non-verbally. If not, however, it is understood and this understanding becomes routinised so that if repair work is not undertaken, a positive evaluation is understood. If, however, the learner production does not correspond to that targetted by the teacher, repair work will be undertaken, generally without overt negative evaluation. Again this becomes routinised, so that if repair work is undertaken, a negative evaluation is understood.

In the data, then, the predominant sequence organisation in form and accuracy contexts is an adjacency pair. The first part of the pair can be called teacher prompt: the teacher introduces a pedagogical focus which requires the production of a precise string of linguistic forms by the learner nominated. The second part of the adjacency pair can be called learner production. In the case of a learner production which coincides with the string targeted by the teacher, there may (or may not) be positive evaluation by the teacher of the learner production.

Extract 3.2

1 T: I have. fine. I’ve got a trumpet. >have you got a trumpet Anna?<
2 L15: ah er erm “yes I have”
3 T: I’ve got a radio. have you got a radio e:r (. ) e:r Alvin?
4 L16: yes I have.

(Seedhouse, 1996, p. 473)
In the above extract there is no verbally expressed positive evaluation of the learner utterance in line 2. A lack of repair work and prompt for another student is understood by all parties as signifying that the learner has produced the targeted string of linguistic forms. In the case of a learner production which does not coincide with the string targeted by the teacher, the teacher will normally initiate repair in order to obtain the targeted string. There may or may not be negative evaluation by the teacher of the learner production, but in section Error! Reference source not found. I suggest that the production of direct and overt negative evaluation is dispreferred.

Extract 3.3

1  T: what are these? (T holds up two pens)
2  L: this are a pen.
3  T: these are(.)
4  L: are pens.
5  T: what is this? (T holds up a ruler)

(Ellis, 1984, p. 103)

In the above extract we can see T (in line 3) initiating repair of L’s utterance without negative evaluation. L produces the target string in line 4. T does not produce a positive evaluation in line 5, but merely continues with the next ‘teacher prompt’. The ‘evaluation’ is therefore generally implicit in the data and is not manifested as an explicitly verbalised action on its own. If the teacher moves on to the next adjacency pair after the learner production, then a positive evaluation is understood, whereas if the teacher initiates repair subsequent to the learner production, then a negative evaluation is understood by all parties. After this interactional route has been completed, the teacher will normally start another adjacency pair with a teacher prompt. The advantage of this description of the sequence (compared to the IRE cycle description) is that it covers all of the data in the database and fits neatly into the interactional architecture described in chapter 5.

We have so far specified the organisation of the interaction in terms of teacher control. It is indeed typical of institutional interaction that a professional controls the interaction (Drew and Heritage 1992a). However, in the L2 classroom the picture can sometimes be rather more complex and subtle, as the following extract illustrates. When, in form and accuracy contexts in the database, there is centralised attention, with the teacher leading whole class interaction, then the interaction will tend to be ‘formal’ in the way described above by Drew and Heritage (1992b, p. 27). However, a focus on form and accuracy can also be maintained in group work and pair work from which the teacher is absent, as we can see in the extract below.

Extract 3.4

(Pairwork commences: the following is a recording of a single pair)

1  L21: I’ve got a radio. have you got a radio?
2  L22: yes.
3  L21: what?
4  L22: yes I have. I’ve got a book. have you got a book?
L21: yes I have.

(Seedhouse, 1996, p. 473)

We noted in extract 3.1 that the teacher in this Norwegian primary school had prepared the students for pairwork by practicing a question/answer sequence using vocabulary items as fillers in a structural slot. Now, when the pairwork commences the teacher is not taking part in the interaction, and yet we can see that there is a degree of constraint imposed on the interaction by the teacher. The teacher has allocated the adjacency pairs which the learners should use in the interaction (question and answer) and has allocated the precise linguistic forms to be used, with only the name of the object to be transformed; these have already been practiced. Lines 2-4 are very revealing: L22 answers “yes”, which would, in normal conversation, be an appropriate answer. However, L21 initiates repair, since the target string of linguistic forms “yes I have” has not been reached. L21 is in effect substituting for the teacher and assuming the teacher’s role in the interaction. L22 demonstrates comprehension of the purpose of the repair initiation by supplying the rest of the targetted string of forms in line 4. We noted in extract 3.1, line 22 above that the same teacher corrected "yes" answers until learners supplied "yes, I have."

So in the L2 classroom it is not always sufficient or accurate to say that the teacher personally controls the interaction, even in a formal form and accuracy context. There are instances in the data in which the teacher is entirely absent from the classroom when the planned interaction is taking place and yet the interaction orients to the teacher’s pedagogical focus (e.g., extract 5.3). The formulation which does cover all of the data is as follows. A pedagogical focus in relation to linguistic form and accuracy is introduced (normally by the teacher, but in learner-centred approaches the focus may be chosen by learners) and learners produce patterns of interaction which are normatively related in some way to the pedagogical focus. I will note many times in the course of this monograph that the vital and omnipresent factor in L2 classroom interaction is the reflexive relationship between the pedagogical focus and the organisation of the interaction; the physical presence and participation of the teacher in the interaction is not always a necessary factor in the data. Extract 3.4 also illustrates that, at primary school level, learners have internalised the architecture of L2 classroom interaction to the extent that they are able to reproduce it accurately in the absence of a teacher and even adopt the teacher's role and repair policy.

This brings us on to the complex relationship between spatial configuration of participants and degree of pre-allocation and hence (according to McHoul, 1978) formality. McHoul specifically equates feelings of formality with the degree of pre-allocation (p. 183) and suggests that “A commonsense observation would be that formal (as opposed to casual, conversational) talk can be accomplished through the spatial arrangement of the participants to that talk. In particular the configuration of and relative distances between participants might be thought of as significant” (McHoul, 1978, p. 183). This point may be valid for the L1 classrooms which McHoul examined, but the situation in the L2 classroom is more complex. The vital factor in all L2 classroom interaction is the reflexive relationship between the pedagogical focus and the organisation of the interaction. This influences the degree of pre-allocation and formality of the interaction just as much as (and possibly more than) the spatial configuration. In extracts 3.1 and 3.4 we see the spatial configuration change from whole-class to pairwork, and we should therefore expect the degree of pre-allocation and formality to decrease. However, as noted above, this does not happen. This is
because the pedagogical focus and corresponding organisation of the interaction have remained similar even though the spatial configuration has changed and the teacher has disappeared.

We have seen in this section that when the pedagogical focus is on linguistic forms, and there is a requirement for learners to produce them with accuracy, then there is also a formal overall organisation of the interaction which is appropriate to this pedagogical focus. This generally involves tight control of turn-taking and a teacher-prompt and learner production adjacency pair with optional evaluation and follow-up actions. However, this does not mean that all interaction in this context is identical; on the contrary, we have seen variability and heterogeneity within the context. In the next section I introduce a contrasting L2 classroom context, in which the focus is on meaning and fluency.

1.2 Turn-Taking and Sequence in Meaning and Fluency Contexts

When the pedagogical focus is on meaning and fluency, the aim is on maximising the opportunities for interaction presented by the classroom pedagogical environment and the classroom speech community itself. Participants talk about their immediate environment, personal relationships, feelings and meanings, or the activities they are engaging in. The focus is on the expression of personal meaning rather than on linguistic forms, on promoting fluency rather than accuracy. This context is often contrasted with the form and accuracy context; Kasper (1986), for example, contrasts language-centred and content-centred interaction. This major shift in pedagogical focus (by comparison with form and accuracy contexts) necessitates a major shift in interactional organisation. Because the learners require interactional space to express personal meanings and develop topics, the organisation of the interaction will necessarily become less narrow and rigid. A frequent criticism of the form and accuracy context is that it does not allow learners to develop interactional skills in the L2 (Van Lier, 1988a, p. 106). Often meaning and fluency contexts are conducted through pair or group work. When the teacher is not present, the learners may manage the interaction themselves to a greater extent. However, in this section we will see teachers having various degrees of control over the interaction whilst maintaining a meaning and fluency focus. In the extract below, T has asked the learners to bring personal belongings to the class and the pedagogical focus introduced is for the learners to describe their personal possessions and their significance to them.

Extract 3.5

1  L1: OK. as you see this is a music box, (.) .hh and my mother made it. it’s=
2  L2: =oh, your mother made it?=
3  L1: =yes, my mother made it. .hh the thing is that when: (.) this is the first thing she
4    did (.) like this, with .hh painting and everything, .hh so nobody. nobody thought
5    that it was going to come out like this.[ hahh ] that’s the point. that’s why
6  LL: [ heehee ]
7  L1: this is special because it took her about three weeks to: to make it, .hh and
8  L3: well. this: this is a record, that for me is really very important. because I’ve
9  (4 lines omitted)
always liked poetry. (.) and one day when I was travelling (.) erm in Can-
by
in Canada, hh I saw this record but I- I didn’t know that it was written
in French (.) and I bought it. [             ] and ah=
LL:                 [ huhuhu]
L2: =did you understand?
L3: of course I- I didn’t understand any anything. but er the with this record I
made up my mind, and I decided to, erm to take up (.) a course in French,
and (.) now I, I (.) understand almost all the poetry and er, (.) all of them are
really pretty because some of them are er, written by Baudelaire, (.) and, er
they are (.) really good, really good and the voice of this man is excellent. (.)
is something really incredible, so for me is, erm (.) well, em (.) a treasure.
LL: (     )
L4: well, my turn.

(British Council, 1985, Volume 4, p. 52)

We can see that the learners manage the interaction locally to a great extent in the
absence of the teacher. Now the teacher has in fact specified the nature of the speech
exchange system as a monologue, in that the instructions were to “talk about your things
now in the same way I did about mine” (p. 51) namely in a monologue. However, the
teacher has also made clear that the learners can organise the turn-taking locally:
“whoever wants to can start” (p. 51). The learners do manage the speech-exchange
system locally in that L2 interrupts L1’s turn (line 2) and L3’s turn (line 15) with
utterances which relate to the content of their previous turns. In line 23 we can see L4
explicitly managing the turn-taking system. Line 23 also shows an orientation to the
idea that the interaction should be organised so that all group members should take a
turn at speaking. The learners express personal meanings, and the linguistic errors (as in
lines 8 and 21) are ignored. The exception is line 9 in which L3 conducts self-initiated
self-repair.

We can also see that it makes sense in this L2 classroom context to talk of the
topic of the interaction, in contrast to form and accuracy contexts. This is evident in the
details of the interaction. For example, the discourse marker oh often occurs in a
meaning and fluency context as a marker of change of information state (Heritage,
1984a), since new information is being exchanged, and it occurs in line 2 of this extract.
Now although meaning and fluency contexts are often conducted in small groups of
learners, they can also be created and maintained in the presence of the teacher. In the
extract below, two learners have just given talks on their respective countries (Germany
and France) and are now discussing issues relating to their countries.

Extract 3.6

1  L6: at first you said you had a lot of problems in France about the Russian
2  immigrants, and I think it’s the same problem now in West Germany with
3  the integration of East German people in the west part of Germany.
4  L2: yes, but I think it’s quite different because (. ) er it’s the same race. I mean
5  (. ) er East and West Germany was the same country before so you are near,
6  and in France it’s with Arabian people and we don’t have the same culture.
7  L6: but (. ) er (. ) With nearly 40 years difference also mean the last 40 years are
8  so different and (. ) er (. )
9  L2: yes
L6: in both countries that I think it’s nearly the same. it’s not the same but
because religion is a big problem and (. ) er I think that between East and
West Germany it’s the same religion and in France we don’t have we have
Catholic religion and Arabian people is muslim religion
most of the East German people have no religion
yes, yes in fact and er the last big problem was with chador. I don’t know
how we call it in English. it is the thing the woman put on her head?
in fact it isn’t English ’cos it’s Arabic, it’s the chador. we use the same
because it’s from the Arabic
and er 3 or 4 months ago we had a big problem because some girls want to
go to school with this chador
or work
yes, and the principal of the school don’t want that this girl come at school
well, I think that it’s normal when you go in another country you must
accept the rules of this country
mm. we had the same thing, a curious thing, the same thing happened here
and the girls in the school wanted to wear the chador
uhu
and we came to a peculiarly British compromise that, yes, they could wear
it but only if it was in the school colour
and the other problem is that er a lot of Arabian people are living in the
same place so they, their integration is very hard. they can’t be integrated.
they are together.
they have their own areas

(Mathers, 1990, p. 123)

Prior to the above extract the teacher had introduced a carrier topic, namely the
learners’ countries. However, in the above extract, the two learners are able to introduce
sub-topics of their own choice. So in line 1, L6 introduces the sub-topic of immigrants,
which is taken up by L2 and the sub-topic shifts in a stepwise movement to religion in
line 11 and to the sub-sub-topic of the chador in line 16. The teacher then takes up in
line 26 the topic nominated by the learners and makes a topical contribution. The
teacher has not thereby taken control of the topic, however, because we see L2
regaining control of the topic in line 31. L2 skip-connects back to the topic which s/he
was developing in line 4, i.e. the argument that France has bigger problems with
integration than does Germany. So in spite of the presence of the teacher, the learners
are able to nominate and negotiate topics themselves.

As far as turn-taking is concerned, we see that the learners are able to take turns
without reference to the teacher; in lines 1-17 the teacher is effectively cut out of the
speech exchange system as the learners address each other directly. In line 17, L2
nominates the teacher and constrains the teacher’s turn, using a form of self-initiated
other-repair which is in effect using the teacher as an interactional resource. In line 20,
L2 continues with his/her own topic. In line 26, T nominates herself to take a turn, but
as this is to make an on-topic contribution, it does not alter the speech exchange
system, and the two learners continue to address each other. However, the interaction
does not continue like this indefinitely - there are after all other learners in the class, and
so the teacher subsequently nominates other learners to speak whilst remaining within
the carrier topic.
We have looked at two extracts in which this context has been maintained by learners having a degree of control over the turn-taking system. As we saw in extracts 3.5 and 3.6 above, the learners were able to locally manage the interaction to some extent in that they were able to nominate themselves and each other for turns rather than having the teacher allocate them. However, as we will see in the extract below, it is possible for the teacher to have fairly firm control over the turn-taking system and to allocate turns to learners and yet still maintain a meaning and fluency focus. However, this does seem to require some complex interactional work on the part of the teacher. The setting is a primary school in Abu Dhabi and the activity is sharing time (Yazigi, 2001) in which a student comes to the front of the class to share his/her experiences with the rest of the class.

Extract 3.7

1 L1: before on Wednesday I went to a trip to Dubai because my father’s work
2 they gave him a paper that we could go to a free trip to Dubai.
3 T : ah::
4 L1: ya, and on the paper it said we could stay in a hotel for any days you want
5 so I said to my father for two days and when I was going to Dubai Mark
6 called me.
7 T: he called you?
8 L1: ya, and we were talking and then when we finished talking, er:: On
9 Thursday my father took me to Burjuman, ya, there was something like this
10 big just twenty dirhams , ya, I bought it and it.=
11 T: = what is this, something like this, it’s big?
12 L1: It’s like a penguin but not a penguin. It’s a bear, ya, not very big like this.
13 T: uhu::
14 L1: like me, ya. I press a button, it moves like this, and it carries me up like this
15 and puts me down.
16 T: are you serious?
17 L1: and also in the hotel I saw the tallest man in the world and the shortest man
18 in the world.
19 T: really? ha! where do they come from?
20 L1: er: I don’t know. One is from China, I don’t know, Japan and one is from
21 here. The tall man he’s like this (extending his right hand up) bigger than
22 the short man.
23 T: Is he the same one that came to school?
24 L1: no, bigger than that one.
25 T: oh really? even taller?
26 L1: (nods)
27 T: Jeez! o.k. thank you Arash for sharing.

(Yazigi, 2001)

The teacher (T hereafter) initiates the interaction by allocating the learner (L1) interactional space. L1 introduces the topic of his trip to Dubai. T’s response in line 3 (ah::) functions as a marker of change of information state (Heritage 1984a) and conveys that the message is understood and that L1 can proceed. In line 4 L1 confirms the new information (ya) and adds further information to clarify the situation. He also introduces a sub-topic (Mark called me.) Mark is a student in class and the speaker is
thereby making a connection between the trip in the outside world and the classroom speech community. T responds to the piece of information in line 4 by rewording it into a question (line 7). The purpose is to encourage L1 to proceed and to show that the point caught her interest. L1 elaborates on the sub-topic of speaking to Mark but he soon drops it and returns to the previous main topic of the trip to Dubai. In line 11 T interrupts L1 requiring clarification and more specific details about what the something is which L1 bought.

Apparently T fears that the meaning and hence interest may get lost on the learners. It should be remembered that L1 is addressing the whole class and clarification was indeed needed so that the listeners can follow the evolving dialogue. L1 responds to the teacher’s initiation and attempts to clarify the point in line 12. Again in line 13, the discourse marker (uhu::) occurs as a marker of change of information state and allows the learner to proceed with the topic and offer further information (line 14). T responds with a question in line 16 which expresses surprise, allocates L1 a turn and in effect allows him interactional space to continue to develop the topic further. However, L1 declines and chooses to open up a new sub-topic, thus inviting T to respond to his new sub-topic. The question posed in line 19 indicates T’s interest in the topic and also effectively requires L1 to confirm the information shared and asks him to provide further information which is provided in lines 20-22. T then draws on common background knowledge (line 23) to make the input more comprehensible to the rest of the class and to enable them to continue to follow the dialogue. She also relates the outside world to the classroom speech community. T finally concludes the sharing episode in line 27. The analysis shows the interaction to be locally managed on a ‘turn-by-turn’ basis. T neither initiates the topic of interaction nor is aware of where the interaction may lead. She also does not know how the learner may respond. The focus is on meaning rather than form, on fluency rather than accuracy. This is evident in that the learner was allocated enough interactional space to develop topics and sub-topics.

The teacher did not attempt at any point to correct minor linguistic errors as these did not impede communication. The pedagogic focus is on the speaker’s expression of personal meaning and on the contribution of new information to the immediate classroom community. The teacher’s role was more that of a mediator whose purpose is to ensure that L1’s message is conveyed to all of the other students, as well as a collaborator in the dialogue, thereby encouraging a smooth flow to the conversation and nurturing fluency. The teacher’s utterances therefore contain markers of change of information state and clarification requests. There is an attempt on both sides, teacher and learner, to connect the real world to the classroom speech community (lines 5 and 23). The teacher attempts to keep the other learners engaged, focused and interested.

In terms of sequence organisation, the situation in this context is far more varied than was the case in form and accuracy contexts. In extract 3.5 the teacher is absent and there are a series of descriptions of objects interspersed by questions about the objects. In extract 3.6 we have a series of points and counter-points in a discussion or debate. In extract 3.7 we saw the teacher controlling turn-taking and using a set of question-answer adjacency pairs. Elsewhere in the data we find a great variety of sequence organisations, which is quite comprehensible in terms of rational organisation. If the pedagogical focus is to allow freedom of expression then it is natural that there will be considerable variety in terms of organisations of the interaction. The common feature is that the learners are developing a topic and the organisation is appropriate to the development of the topic.

We have seen that a meaning and fluency context can be maintained a) in the absence of the teacher; b) in the presence of the teacher, but with the learners managing
the turn-taking; c) with the teacher being present and in overall control of the turn-taking. Although the precise pedagogical focus and speech-exchange system vary, the crucial point is that the learners are allocated sufficient interactional space to be able to nominate and develop a topic or sub-topic and to contribute new information concerning their immediate classroom speech community and their immediate environment, personal relationships, feelings and meanings, or the activities they are engaging in.

1.3 Turn-Taking and Sequence in Task-Oriented Contexts

The concept of task-based learning (TBL) has come to occupy a central position in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research, and we now turn our attention to task-oriented interaction. However, it is firstly necessary to disentangle problems related to intended and actual pedagogical focus. At this point we need to introduce a distinction vital to the argument of the monograph, namely between task-as-workplan and task-in-process (Breen, 1989). The task-as-workplan is the intended pedagogy, the plan prior to classroom implementation of what the teachers and learners will do. The task-in-process is the actual pedagogy or what actually happens in the classroom. As we will see during the course of the monograph, there is often a significant difference between what is supposed to happen and what actually happens. The task-as-workplan is always an etic specification and it has a very weak ontology, comparable to that of an airplane flight plan. Although the task-as-workplan may exist in the physical shape of a lesson plan or coursebook unit, the actual event is always the task-in-process. Empirical data in classroom research are gathered from the task-in-process, and this monograph focusses solely on the task-in-process, although it often compares the ethnographic evidence of task-as-workplan with the actual task-in-process.

We should therefore be very clear that in this section we are not necessarily dealing with the concept of task as etically specified in terms of task-as-workplan in the TBL literature. Rather, we are dealing with interaction in which we can emically demonstrate in the details of the interaction (task-in-process) that the learners are focussed on a task. The characterisation task-oriented in this monograph therefore derives empirically from the data. The two perspectives may coincide, but this is not necessarily the case. There is further discussion of this matter below.

In task-oriented contexts, the teacher introduces a pedagogical focus by allocating tasks to the learners and then generally withdraws, allowing the learners to manage the interaction themselves. It appears to be typical in this context, therefore, that the teacher does not play any part in the interaction, although learners do sometimes ask the teacher for help when they are having difficulty with the task. By contrast with the two previous contexts, there is generally no focus on personal meanings or on linguistic forms. The learners must communicate with each other in order to accomplish a task, and the focus is on the accomplishment of the task rather than on the language used. In effect, as we will see, it is the nature of the task-in-process as interpreted by the learners which constrains the nature of the speech exchange system which the learners use. We will now consider three characteristics of task-oriented interaction (Seedhouse, 1999b) by examining extracts from the database. These are that there is a reflexive relationship between the nature of the task and the turn-taking system, a tendency to minimalisation and indexicality and that tasks tend to generate instances of clarification requests, confirmation checks, comprehension checks and self-repetitions.
**Characteristic 1. There is a reflexive relationship between the nature of the task and the turn-taking system**

Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974, p. 696) suggest that "Since they are used to organize sorts of activities that are quite different from one another, it is of particular interest to see how operating turn-taking systems are characterizable as adapting to properties of the sorts of activities in which they operate". In order to illustrate how this is operationalised, we will consider the interaction produced by tasks in Warren (1985). I will quote Warren’s task-as-workplan so that it is clear how the nature of the task and the resultant turn-taking system are related.

The ‘Maps’ task below was based on the ‘information gap’ principle and was carried out by pairs of students separated from each other by a screen. Both students had a map of the same island but one of the maps had certain features missing from it. A key illustrating the missing features was given to each student so that they knew what these features were. In the case of the student with the completed map the key enabled him/her to know what was missing from the other map and in the case of the other participant it showed how the missing features were to be represented on his/her map. The student with the completed map had to tell the other student where missing features had to be drawn. Throughout the activity the teacher was present to ensure that the students did not abuse the presence of the screen. The idea behind having a screen to separate the participants was that they would then be forced to communicate verbally in order to complete the task. (Warren, 1985, p. 56)

The following extract is typical of the interaction which resulted from this task.

**Extract 3.8**

1 L1: the road from the town to the Kampong Kelantan (pause) the coconut=
2 L2: =again, again.
3 L1: (. ) the: the road, is from the town to Kampong Kelantan (6.5) the
town: is: (. ) in the Jason Bay.
4 L2: (3.5) again. the town (. ) where is the town?
5 L1: the town is: (. ) on the Jason Bay.
6 L2: (1.0) the: road?
7 L1: the road is from the town to Kampong Kelantan (10.4) OK?
8 L2: OK
9 L1: (. ) the mountain is: behind the beach, and the Jason Bay (8.1) the
river is: from the jungle, (. ) to the Desaru (9.7) the mou- er the
volcano is above on the Kampong Kelantan (7.2) the coconut
tree is: (. ) along the beach.

(Warren, 1985, p. 271)

The progress of the interaction is jointly constructed here. Turn order, turn size and turn design are intimately related to the progress of the task. So, for example, in line 1, L1 provides one item of information to L2 and then proceeds with the second item of information without checking whether L2 has noted the first piece of information (the
two learners cannot see each other). Because L2 has not finished noting the first piece of information, L2 initiates repetition. In line 2 we see that L2 is able to alter the course of the interaction through a repetition request which requires L1 to backtrack. In other words, because the task has not yet progressed sufficiently, L2 takes a turn to allocate both a turn and a turn type to L1 which will facilitate the progress of the task. In line 7, L2 asks where the road is. In line 8, L1 supplies the information, waits for 11 seconds and then makes a confirmation check (“OK?”) to L2 to ascertain whether L2 has completed that sub-section of the task. L1 appears to be orienting his utterances to L2’s difficulty in completing the task in that L1 uses an identical sentence structure each time and in that L1 leaves pauses between different items of information. We can see these pauses in lines 3, 8, 10, 11 and 12, and they vary from 6.5 seconds to 10.4 seconds in length. Repetition requests are focused on information necessary for the task in lines 2, 5 and 7. In line 8 the confirmation check is focused on establishing whether a particular sub-section of the task has been accomplished or not.

We can see in the above extract that the nature of the task, in effect, tends to constrain the organisation of turn-taking and sequence. In task-oriented interaction, the focus is on the accomplishment of the task. In order to accomplish this particular task, the learners must take turns in order to exchange information. The nature of the task here pushes L1 to make statements to which L2 will provide feedback, clarification or repetition requests or repair initiation. The speech-exchange system is thus constrained to some degree. However, the two learners are also to some extent actively developing a turn-taking system which is appropriate to the task and which excludes elements which are superfluous to the accomplishment of the task. So we should clarify that there is a reflexive relationship between the nature of the task as interpreted by the learners (the task-in-process) and the turn-taking system.

I will now examine another instance of interaction within a task-oriented context from Warren (1985) in order to further illustrate the reflexive nature of the relationship between the task focus and the turn-taking system. ‘Blocks’ is another task based on the ‘information gap’ principle. In this activity the students were in pairs separated by a screen and in front of each student were five wooden building bricks of differing shapes and colours. The teacher arranged the bricks of one of the students into a certain pattern and it was then the task of that student to explain to his/her partner how to arrange the other set of bricks so that they were laid out according to the pattern. A time limit of sixty seconds was imposed after which the teacher arranged the other student’s bricks into another pattern and the activity was carried out once more (Warren, 1985, p. 57).

Extract 3.9

1 L1: ready?
2 L2: ready
3 L1: er (. ) the blue oblong above the red oblong, eh? the yellow oblong.
4 L2: (. ) alright. (. ) >faster, faster. <=
5 L1: =the: red cylinder ( . ) beside the (. ) blue oblong,
6 L2: (. ) left or right?=
7 L1: =right.
8 L2: (. ) right yeah ( ) OK.
9 L1: (1.0) the the red cube (. ) was: (1.0)
10 L2: the red cube?
11 L1: (. ) the red cube was (. ) behind the (. ) blue oblong.
In this extract we can see the learners’ orientation to the time limit set for completion of the task (1 minute), in that L2 says “faster, faster” in line 4. When we compare this extract with the previous one, we can see that these learners have developed a variant of the turn-taking system apparently in orientation to the time limit. In this extract we see L2 telling L1 when he has finished a particular stage (lines 4, 8 and 12) and this enables L1 to commence giving the next item of information as soon as L2 has finished noting the previous one. This procedure clearly minimises gap, as we can see when we compare this with the previous extract. In lines 8, 10 and 12, L2 appears to repeat what L1 has said in order to confirm his understanding of L1’s utterance, to display the stage that L2 is at in the process of noting the information, and to delay L1 in order that he should not begin the next item of information until prompted to do so. In this sense L2’s repetition may be functioning in a similar way to a filler or gap-avoider in normal conversation (McHoul, 1978). This is particularly evident in line 12, in which L2 repeats L1’s utterance twice before giving confirmation of completion.

The types of turns are constrained by the nature of the task, as are turn order and even turn size, because of the time limit. The basic organisation of turn-taking and sequence is again that L1 makes statements to which L2 will provide feedback, clarification or repetition requests or repair initiation. On the one hand, the learners are creatively engaged in developing turn-taking systems which are appropriate to the accomplishment of the task. On the other hand, we can see that the nature of the task constrains the turn-taking system which the learners create. This illustrates very neatly the central argument of this monograph, namely that the relationship between the pedagogical focus and the organisation of the interaction is a reflexive one. We can see in this case that it is not merely that the pedagogical focus and the nature of the task constrain the patterns of interaction produced. From the opposite perspective, no-one has told the learners exactly how to conduct the interaction, so by actively creating an organisation of the interaction which they see as appropriate to the task, they are modifying and re-interpreting the nature of the pedagogical focus and of the task. The way in which they choose to conduct the interaction transforms the teacher's task-as-workplan into the learners' task-in-process.

**Characteristic 2. There is a tendency to minimalisation and indexicality**

We now shift our attention from the speech-exchange system to the linguistic forms which are used. The nature of the task tends to constrain the kinds of linguistic forms used in the learners’ turns, and there is a general tendency to minimising linguistic forms. This is evident in extract 3.9 above. L1 produces utterances from which the verb be is missing, with the exception of lines 11 and 13, where it is used in an inappropriate tense. This is an example of what Duff (1986, p. 167) calls “topic comment constructions without syntacticized verbal elements” which are quite common in task-oriented interaction. It should also be noted that omission of copulas is a feature of pidgins and creoles (Graddol, Leith and Swann, 1996, p. 220). There is a general tendency to ellipsis, to minimise the volume of language used and to produce only that which is necessary to accomplish the task. Turns tend to be relatively short with simple syntactic constructions (Duff, 1986, p. 167). What we also often find in practice in task-oriented interaction is a tendency to
produce very indexical or context-bound interaction i.e. it is inexplicit and hence obscure to anybody reading the extracts without knowledge of the task in which the participants were engaged. The interaction can be understood only in relation to the task which the learners are engaged in. Interactants in a task seem to produce utterances at the lowest level of explicitness necessary to the successful completion of the task, which is perfectly appropriate, since the focus is on the completion of the task. Indeed, the interactants are displaying their orientation to the task precisely through their use of minimalisation and indexicality. However, L2 teachers who are reading the transcripts may tend to find the actual language produced in task-oriented interaction to be impoverished and esoteric. In the extract below, for example, learners are required to complete and label a geometric figure.

Extract 3.10

L1: what?
L2: stop.
L3: dot?
L4: dot?
L5: point?
L6: dot?
LL: point point, yeah.
L1: point?
L5: small point.
L3: dot.

(Lynch, 1989, p. 124)

Task-oriented interaction often seems very unimpressive to L2 teachers when read in a transcript because of these tendencies to indexicality and minimalisation. The tendency to context-boundedness is probably not a serious problem from a pedagogical point of view. The whole point of TBL is that the learners should become immersed in the context of a task, and anyway, task-oriented interaction in the world outside the classroom frequently displays precisely this context-bound nature. However, the tendency towards minimalisation and ellipsis may be a more significant problem as far as L2 pedagogy is concerned. Now it could be argued that people engaged in tasks in the world outside the classroom also often display some tendency towards minimalisation, although generally not to the extent seen above. However, the point is that L2 teachers want to see in classroom interaction some evidence of the learners’ linguistic competence being stretched and challenged and upgraded.

The theory of TBL (derived from an etic consideration of task-as-workplan) is that tasks promote this; for example, Nunan (1988, p. 84) suggests that two-way tasks “stimulate learners to mobilise all their linguistic resources, and push their linguistic knowledge to the limit.” However, what we often find in practice in task-oriented interaction is more or less the opposite process, with the learners producing a minimum display of their linguistic competence using minimalised, reduced forms. The learners appear to be so concentrated on completing the task that linguistic forms are treated merely as a vehicle of minor importance. However, this is precisely as the TBL theory says it should be, as in Willis’s definition of a task (1990, p. 127): “By a task I mean an activity which involves the use of language but in which the focus is on the outcome of the activity rather than on the language used to achieve that outcome.”
Characteristic 3. Tasks tend to generate many instances of clarification requests, confirmation checks, comprehension checks and self-repetitions

However, TBL/SLA approaches have promoted task-based interaction as particularly conducive to second language acquisition. There are two points to be noted here. Firstly, the surprising thing about TBL literature is the lack of evidence in the form of lesson transcripts concerning those benefits which are claimed for tasks. For example, Prabhu (1987) promotes, in a book-length study, the advantages of task-based teaching as opposed to structural teaching. Turning to the “transcripts of project lessons” (1987: 123-137) one might therefore expect to find transcripts of impressive task-oriented interaction. In actual fact, one finds no examples of task-oriented interaction at all, but rather transcripts of “pre-task stages of a lesson” which contain exclusively teacher-led question and answer sequences.

Secondly, proponents of TBL/SLA approaches have tended to use a self-fulfilling methodology which presents task-oriented interaction in the most favourable light. A quantitative, segmental methodology has been used which isolates and counts individual features which tend to be abundant in task-oriented interaction. It is claimed that these individual features are particularly conducive to second language acquisition, from which it follows that TBL approaches are particularly conducive to second language acquisition. According to Long (1985, 1996) and associates, modified interaction or negotiation for meaning is necessary for language acquisition. The relationship may be summarised as follows. Interactional modification makes input comprehensible. Comprehensible input promotes acquisition. Therefore, interactional modification promotes acquisition. There has been considerable criticism of the above interaction hypothesis (summarised in Ellis, 1994, p. 278), much of it targeting the reasoning cited above.

The features which have generally been selected for quantitative treatment are clarification requests, confirmation checks, comprehension checks and self-repetitions, which are all characteristic of ‘modified interaction’ or negotiation for meaning. As we have seen in extracts 3.8 and 3.9, task-oriented interaction may feature numerous clarification requests, confirmation checks, comprehension checks and self-repetitions (but see Foster, 1998), and indeed interactants may display their orientation to the task by means of these features. Tasks may or may not generate modified interaction; this may or may not be beneficial to second language acquisition. However, from the perspective of this monograph, this sub-variety of interaction needs to be evaluated as a whole, and from a holistic perspective, rather than selecting superficially isolable features of the interaction for quantification. The organisation of repair in task-oriented contexts is outlined in section Error! Reference source not found.. It is worth pointing out here, however, that clarification requests, confirmation checks, comprehension checks are merely the social actions or functions performed by the repair. This constitutes only one small part of the overall organisation of repair, which includes trajectories and preference organisation (see section Error! Reference source not found.). From the perspective of this monograph, then, SLA research on modified interaction has deprived itself of the analytical power of the CA approach to repair by using in isolation only one small and isolated component of this complex organisation.

Two potential problems on the pedagogical level with task-oriented interaction which appear in the data are associated with the lack of teacher supervision. This is not to say that learners are always unsupervised, but in a large class the teacher must circulate between groups or pairs. In the Norwegian data, in which I recorded four groups working on tasks simultaneously, there was sometimes evidence of learners
going more off-task as the teacher moved away and more on-task as the teacher approached\(^9\). The problems are that students can produce linguistic errors which go uncorrected and that students can go off-task, including speaking in the L1. In the extract below we can see learners going considerably off-task, producing untreated errors in the L2 and using the L1. The task-as-workplan was to discuss paintings, but the task-in-process at this point has no connection with this.

Extract 3.11

L1: *skål vi synge en sang? vi synger den derre Fader Jakob!* ((tr: shall we sing a song? let’s sing “Frère Jacques”!))
L2: *hae?* ((tr: what?)=)
L1: =*Fader Jakob* ((tr: Frère Jacques)=
L3: =*NO!=
L2: =on English, I can’t sing that song in English,
L2: yes,=
L2: =no.(.)
L1: you can!
L3: how it starts?
L1: are you sleeping, are you sleeping, ↑brother John, brother John. (sings)
L2: we are supposed to work not (.) not sing.
L1: erm (1.0) >morningbells are ringing morningbells are ringing< ding dang dong ding dang dong.
L2: we are supposed to work not [(1.0) not sing]
L1: [yes. I just got] to show how good I am to sing
L3: °you are not good at singing.°
L1: I know,=
L3: =you are *elendig* ((tr: awful))

(Seedhouse, 1996, p. 454)

At this point we need to clarify the relationship between the task-oriented interaction we have been examining and the conception of task in the TBL/SLA literature. We have characterised the typical features of task-oriented interaction as a sub-variety based on empirical evidence in the task-in-process of an emic focus on the accomplishment of a task. By contrast, the TBL/SLA literature involves (almost exclusively) an etic specification and conceptualisation of task in terms of task-as-workplan prior to classroom implementation. According to Ellis (2003, p. 9) the first criterial feature of a task is that it is a workplan. There are well-known conceptual problems involved in the numerous different definitions of what is (and is not) a task, summarised in Ellis (2003, pp. 2-9). From the perspective of this monograph, however, the problems of the TBL/SLA approach stem from the decision to base the approach on an etic focus on task-as-workplan rather than on task-in-process in the classroom. The vital point to make here is that the empirical characterisation of task-oriented interaction performed in this section is not necessarily the same thing as the theoretical/pedagogical specification of task in the TBL/SLA literature. How such specifications in terms of task-as-workplan are operationalised in terms of task-in-process must be determined on a turn-by-turn basis using an emic, holistic analysis. In this monograph we see numerous examples of tasks-as-workplan being re-interpreted by learners or transformed by the interactional organisation of the L2 classroom (e.g. extract 5.8).
When researchers do examine what actually happens in the classroom, they often discover mismatches between TBL/SLA theory and practice. Foster (1998, p. 1) for example, found that "Contrary to much SLA theorizing, … 'negotiation for meaning' is not a strategy that language learners are predisposed to employ when they encounter gaps in their understanding." She concludes (p. 21) that "Some current claims in SLA research are of academic rather than practical interest because researchers have lost sight of the world inhabited by language teachers and learners. If language acquisition research wants to feed into teaching methodology, the research environment has to be willing to move out of the laboratory and into the classroom." Coughlan and Duff (1994) demonstrate that the same task-as-workplan does not yield comparable results in terms of task-in-process when performed by several individuals, or even when performed by the same individual on two different occasions. This also means that there is a crucial conceptual and methodological problem at the heart of TBL/SLA. This is that almost all conceptualisation and discussion is based on the task-as-workplan, and yet all of the data are gathered from the task-in-process, and the two are not necessarily the same thing at all. We will examine the impact of the problem on TBL/SLA research practice in section Error! Reference source not found.

A further conceptual problem in the TBL/SLA literature is the question of what learners focus on during tasks. In the literature there is a general assumption that task-based interaction is meaning focussed (Ellis, 2003, p. 3). However, as we have seen in the analysis of extracts above, it may be that the participants' focus in task-oriented interaction is neither on form nor meaning but rather narrowly on getting the task finished. This is in accordance with the definition of task cited above (Willis, 1990, p. 127). Duff (1986) distinguishes between convergent tasks, such as those illustrated here, and divergent tasks such as discussion and debate. The evidence from the database of this study is that discussion and debate can and do occur in the L2 classroom; Warren (1985) provides some excellent examples. The organisation of the interaction is fundamentally different to task-oriented interaction and so it is characterised as a separate L2 classroom context in Seedhouse (1996).

Since I may appear to have been very critical of TBL/SLA approaches here I should clarify that, in my opinion, virtually all of the problems identified stem from TBL/SLA's current etic focus on the task-as-workplan. If the focus shifts to the task-in-process in the classroom (as some studies such as Ellis (2001b) have started to do) then not only should these problems disappear, but TBL/SLA would also be able to make itself much more relevant to classroom practice. See section Error! Reference source not found. for proposals on how this shift can be accomplished. The aim of this section has been to sketch the characteristics of task-oriented interaction as a variety of interaction and to balance the rosy TBL/SLA theoretical claims with empirical evidence of some less-than-rosy practical drawbacks. Task-oriented interaction is a particularly narrow and restricted variety of communication in which the whole organisation of the interaction is geared to establishing a tight and exclusive focus on the accomplishment of the task. There are a multitude of different varieties of interaction in the world outside the L2 classroom, where there is certainly a lot more to communication than 'performing tasks'. We can also see in this monograph that there are various different sub-varieties of communication which can occur in the L2 classroom.

One aim of this monograph is to provide technical characterisations of these L2 classroom contexts and also to show that each sub-variety has its own peculiar advantages and disadvantages and limitations from a pedagogical and interactional point of view. CA methodology is particularly well suited to the task as its origins have nothing to do with language teaching, and so it is pedagogically neutral. Despite the seemingly impressive
theoretical arguments put forward to promote task-based learning, it remains to be proven that task-oriented interaction is more effective than other sub-varieties of classroom interaction. This section concludes that it would at present be unsound to take a strong TBL approach which promoted task-oriented interaction at the expense of the other sub-varieties and which took task as the basis for an entire pedagogical methodology and for course and materials design. This monograph suggests that it is time to take a more holistic approach and to examine dispassionately the pros and cons of each and every sub-variety of L2 classroom interaction on the basis of the empirical interactional evidence and on the basis of its relationship to learning processes. We could then consider, for any particular group of learners, what balance and mixture of sub-varieties of L2 classroom interaction might be most suitable within their curriculum, and we could promote task-oriented interaction as one element within the mixture.

To summarise, in this context the pedagogical focus is appropriate to the speech-exchange system in that both are oriented to the completion of the task. The pedagogical focus is on the outcome of the activity and the turn-taking system is reflexively related to the task-in-process and oriented to the successful completion of the task. It is generally not relevant to talk of topic or meaning in this context; the learners' focus is on the task.

1.4 The Organisation of Turn-Taking and Sequence in Procedural Contexts

The first three L2 classroom contexts discussed are optional, i.e. they do not occur in every lesson. However, the procedural context is obligatory; it occurs in every lesson as a precursor to another L2 classroom context. The teacher’s aim in this L2 classroom context is to transmit procedural information to the students concerning the classroom activities which are to be accomplished in the lesson. In the database, this is overwhelmingly delivered in a monologue, as in the following example.

Extract 3.12

T: I’d like you to discuss the following statements. and then you read them, >I don’t read them< those for you. if there are words you’re not sure of (1.0) in these statements you can ask me. but the (cough) statement and you can pick out the statements you want to to start with. you don’t have to do it in in the (.) way in the (.) way (cough) I have written them. so if you find out that one of them has you’d like to discuss more thoroughly you just pick out the the statement that you think is most (.) or is easier to discuss. (1.0) maybe there will be so much (.) disagreement that you will only be able to discuss two or three of them, that’s what I hope. (.) so if you just start now forming the groups, (1.0) should I help you to do that? (T divides LL into groups).

(Seedhouse, 1996, p. 373)

The turn-taking system in this L2 classroom context is therefore probably the most simple, straightforward and by far the most homogenous of all the L2 classroom contexts. In the majority of transcripts there is no turn-taking at all. The teacher has the floor and is in little danger of being interrupted, so we can often find pauses during the
teacher’s monologue. In the extract above there are three pauses of 1.0 seconds. It is not necessary for the teacher to indicate at the transition relevant points that her turn is continuing by means, for example, of fillers or rising intonation. As McHoul (1978, p. 192) says (with reference to L1 classrooms), teachers need not be concerned with having their turns cut off at any possible completion point by any other parties. Nonetheless, teacher monologues must be viewed as jointly constructed, with the learners actively cooperating by withholding their talk. This does not mean that the procedural context invariably consists of an unbroken monologue from start to finish, however. Three possible variations are evident in the data. Firstly, a student may wish to take a turn during the procedural monologue, and this is often in order to ask a question concerning the procedure, as in the extract below. Typically, the student will indicate his/her wish to take a turn by raising a hand.

Extract 3.13

T: you were supposed to prepare for today (.) e:r by answering (.) the last of the questions in your (.) e:rm this volume, (.) the the company volume.(.)
L1: men eg har’kkje faatt gjort leksa eg? ((tr: but I haven’t done my homework?))
T: um well, (.) that’s your problem not mine?

(Seedhouse, 1996, p. 372)

Secondly, the teacher may elect to make the procedural context more interactive by altering the turn-taking system so that the students are able to take turns as in extract 3.14 below.

Extract 3.14

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

(Nunan, 1988, p. 139)

In the extract above 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, maximise motivation and the potential for interaction in that particular stage of the lesson.

Thirdly, the teacher may, having explained the procedure, ask a learner to verify the procedure, as in the following extract.

Extract 3.15
T: What do we have to do? Karine, can you explain?
L: We have, er (. ) to describe what it's wrong, er (. ) in the object.

(Lubelska and Matthews, 1997, p. 118)

When a researcher records a well-established class, the procedural context may be of minimal length, in that the teacher has, over the previous course of study, established procedural routines with which the students are, by the moment of recording, well familiar. Abdesselem characterises procedural context interaction (which he calls classroom management in the following way: “Most moves are similar in all lessons and tend to be produced and reacted to automatically. Thus, students and teacher operate within a narrow range of language, much of which is formulaic” (Abdesselem, 1993, p. 229). In the extract below we can see formulaic language of minimal length used to outline procedures in a well-established class:

Extract 3.16

T: now you’re going to do the pairwork, (1.5) *foerst saa spoer dokker saa svar dokker saa skifter dokker ut* (0.8), dokker trenger ikke aa ta New York for eksempel dokker kan bytte ut tidene og navnan, skjoenner dokker? (0.8) noen som ikke forstaar? (1.5) ok.

(Seedhouse, 1996, p. 498)

This also introduces an interesting phenomenon, namely whether procedural information is transmitted in the L1, the L2, or a mixture of both, as in the above example. The evidence from my Norwegian database is as follows. In lessons 1, 2, 3 and 4 (i.e. secondary and tertiary schools) procedural context interaction was conducted solely in English. In lessons 5, 6 and 7 (primary schools) there are a variety of strategies. In lesson 6 the teacher uses Norwegian almost exclusively to transmit procedural information. In lessons 5 and 7 teachers sometimes use exclusively English, and sometimes exclusively Norwegian to transmit procedural information. However, there is a frequent *double-checking* strategy which involves giving the procedural information first in English and then in Norwegian as in extract 3.17.

Extract 3.17

T: and here, ( . ) here are (1.5) the (0.5) eleven words. (. ) now you are going to write down four of these words >no skal de skriva ned fire av de orda som staar nede paa arket< ( (tr: now you write down four of those words on your paper))

(Seedhouse, 1996, p. 477)

The evidence from the Norwegian schools’ database is therefore that procedural information is more likely to be transmitted exclusively in the L2 the greater the age and the greater the level of linguistic proficiency of the learners. The basic focus in this
procedural context, then, is on the transmission of procedural information and the basic system of teacher monologue is appropriate to this focus. There is no generally little or no turn-taking involved in this context and there is very little variation in the database in terms of the manifestations of this context.

**Methodological Issues**

In this chapter we have seen examples of L2 classroom contexts which are fairly clearly delimited. However, since teachers’ and learners’ motivations and orientations do not always coincide, struggles for control of the pedagogical focus and hence the L2 classroom context sometimes occurs. The most common tension between contexts occurs in the data between form and accuracy and meaning and fluency contexts. One could also express this in pedagogical terms as tension between a pedagogical focus on form and a focus on meaning. A common scenario in the data is for learners to protest (generally in an indirect or oblique way) that the form and accuracy context interaction which they are involved in bears little resemblance to real-world meaning, and that they have little interactional space to express personal meanings. In other words, learners often seem to hint that they would like to move more towards a meaning and fluency context. Sometimes there is also evidence in the data of a simultaneous dual focus on both form and meaning, an issue which is currently of great interest to researchers and practitioners. These issues are discussed in detail in Seedhouse (1996) and Seedhouse (1997b) but cannot be included here for reasons of space.

Chapter Five provides a full discussion on methodological issues, but it is worth drawing attention at this point to some of the differences between the CA approach to ordinary conversation outlined in Chapter 1 and the approach to L2 classroom interaction taken in this Chapter. The dimensions and nature of ‘applied CA’ in relation to institutional interaction are controversial issues and space does not permit a full discussion here; see, however, Drew (in press), ten Have (1999; 2001), Richards (in press). CA methodology is always concerned with making explicit the interactional orientations and concerns of participants. Now clearly the participants’ concerns will inevitably vary in each institutional setting, and so CA methodology will evolve in a slightly different way in each institutional setting in order to portray the participants’ different concerns and orientations. For example, Drew (1992, p. 472) explicates a device for producing inconsistency in, and damaging implications for, a witness’s evidence during cross-examination in a courtroom trial. Clearly these participants’ interactional concerns are unique to this institutional setting. Although Drew is using a CA methodology, he is in effect simultaneously developing a sub-variety of CA methodology appropriate to the analysis of cross-examination in courtroom settings; he is selecting for analysis a device which is unique to that institutional setting and explicating the interactional work unique to that setting which the device accomplishes. In exactly the same way, this study will be using an overall CA methodology whilst in effect simultaneously developing a sub-variety of CA methodology appropriate to the analysis of interaction in L2 classrooms. This study will select for analysis those concerns and competences which are unique to the L2 classroom and attempt to explicate how the interaction is accomplished in the institutional setting and to uncover the machinery which produces the interaction.

When studying institutional varieties, CA practitioners have inevitably adopted some technical terms used by professionals in that institution to describe aspects of the interaction. For example, Drew’s (1992) study cross-examination in rape trials starts with an explanation of legal practices and employs many legal (i.e. non-CA) terms.
From the ethnomethodological standpoint, analysts are supposed to be representing the participants' perspective, which may include the terms they use to describe their practices. Also, if we invented new ‘CA’ terms for the same phenomena, we would create a new set of problems, including the problem of the professionals themselves not understanding them. For these reasons I am employing in this monograph a number of terms such as ‘meaning and fluency’, ‘form and accuracy’ which originate in the applied linguistics literature and are not CA terms.

1.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have sketched the basic overall speech exchange system of four different L2 classroom contexts and attempted to portray the reflexive relationship between the pedagogical focus of the interaction and the organisation of turn-taking and sequence. As the pedagogical focus varies, so the organisation of turn and sequence varies. The chapter has attempted to show that a dynamic and variable approach to context is necessary to portray the multiplicity of speech exchange systems which we find in the data. It is clear from this chapter that it would be totally untenable to talk about ‘the speech-exchange system of the L2 classroom’. We have seen that in some L2 classroom contexts the learners manage turn-taking locally and creatively to a great extent\(^{10}\), and it would be quite inaccurate to state that only teachers can direct speakership in any creative way (McHoul 1978, p. 188) in the L2 classroom. We have seen great variety in relation to the speech exchange systems of the L2 classroom contexts examined here. At one end of the spectrum, in procedural contexts there is a very high degree of homogeneity; we generally find a teacher monologue with no turn-taking at all. At the other end of the spectrum, in meaning and fluency contexts, there is enormous heterogeneity in terms of systems of turn-taking and sequencing. Again this is rationally linked to pedagogical focus; conveying instructions favours a monologue whereas expressing meanings, feelings and opinions favours a diversity of organisations. In this chapter we have also seen that the architecture of L2 classroom interaction is so flexible that it is able to adopt virtually any speech exchange system (to suit a particular pedagogical focus) and still remain identifiable L2 classroom interaction. We will see in section Error! Reference source not found. that this is because certain properties are manifest in the interaction whatever the L2 classroom context, and whatever particular speech exchange system is in operation. For reasons of space we have discussed only four L2 classroom contexts; further characterisations are available in Seedhouse (1996).

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1 See the final section of this chapter for notes on the use of terminology.
2 The notion of ‘meaning’ is inherently problematic. For discussion, see Seedhouse (1996, 1997b).
3 The analysis was co-written with Rana Yazigi.
4 This is not to suggest that learning only takes place when it is “visible” in transcripts. However, teachers in practice constantly evaluate spoken learner interaction and treat it as evidence of progress or otherwise.
5 Bygate (1988, p. 74) however suggests that such talk may “enable learners to produce dependent units appropriately in the context of discourse, without imposing the additional processing load implied by the requirements of having to produce complete sentences.”
6 In this section I am moving away from a CA analysis of interactional data to discuss issues of a pedagogical and theoretical nature, since they are complex and require some elaboration.
7 The following definitions are based on Ellis (1994). Problems often arise in communication involving L2 learners. Negotiation of meaning is work undertaken to secure understanding. This often involves modified interaction, including comprehension checks and clarification requests. Input is the language learners are exposed to. This can be made comprehensible by various means, e.g. simplification and using context.
See also Wagner (1996).

See also Markee (in press).

See Seedhouse (1996) for further examples of such contexts.