

Language Moments in Second Language Interaction: Relevance of Understanding to Learning

Yo-An Lee *

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Interactional modification is important in SLA research because it involves correcting problematic L2 use. However, not all modifications will lead to pedagogical changes. Participants in conversational interactions are not always oriented to linguistic forms or functions. One way to address this dilemma is to examine the process by which participants come to terms with problematic L2 use in interactional exchanges. “Language moments” refer to cases in which L2 forms and functions are objects of interactive exchanges in L2 interactions. Through conversation analysis, the present study uncovered four different types in which participants in L2 interaction discovered and acted on language moments in terms of the degree of explicitness in recognizing and addressing problematic L2 use. This study used data from ESL classroom interactions that featured native teachers of English and L2 learners in an US context. This descriptive account of interactional processes might complement prior research studies that have focused on effects of interactional modification.

Key words: language moment conversation analysis, interactional modification, second language acquisition, classroom discourse, repair

*Author: Yo-An Lee, Professor, English Department, Baekbeom-ro 35, Mapo-gu, Sogang University, Seoul, 04107, Korea; Email: yoanlee@sogang.ac.kr

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1. INTRODUCTION

One important aim in interactionist research is to explain how language forms and functions develop from communicative needs in second language (L2) interaction (Gass, 2003; Long, 2007; Mackey, 2008). Particularly important are *negotiations for meaning* in which “learners and competent speakers provide and interpret signals of their own and their interlocutors’ perceived comprehension, thus providing adjustments to linguistic forms, conversational structures, message content, or all three, until acceptable level of understanding is achieved” (Long, 1996, p. 418). These interactional modifications are classified into various conceptual constructs such as corrective feedback (Lyster, 2015; Sheen, 2010), recast (Egi, 2007; Loewen & Philp, 2006; Long, 2007; Nassaji, 2017), or elicitation (Nassaji, 2007; Rahimian, 2013).

Not all modifications, however, lead to pedagogical outcomes. Participants in conversational interactions are not always oriented to linguistic forms or functions (Aston, 1986; Coughlan & Duff, 1994); problematic L2 use is often taken for granted or glossed over. That is to say, participants’ interactional moves do not always fall into the analytic categories postulated in the interactionist framework (Hauser, 2005; Liddicoat, 1997; Philp, 2003). To address this dilemma, L2 researchers have refined analytic categories (Braid, 2002; Egi, 2007; Ellis, Loewen, & Erlam, 2006; Ellis & Sheen, 2006; Nassaji, 2017) with limited success.

One useful alternative to this dilemma is to trace interactional exchanges in real-time interactions. Instead of classifying participants’ moves into pre-formulated constructs, this alternative approach investigates occasions in which L2 forms and functions become the object of interactive exchanges among participants (Lee, 2013). These occasions constitute *language moments* in which problematic L2 use is discovered and transformed into pedagogical uptake during interactions. This approach is designed to investigate what participants do with problematic L2 use during their interactions. The key to this undertaking is to trace the process in which participants recognize what prior turns mean and what action these turns prompt accordingly, described as *sense-making work* (Lee, 2006; Moerman & Sacks, 1988). This approach follows the precepts of conversation analysis (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974; Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977; Sidnell, 2013; Wong & Waring, 2021) to explicate choices participants make among an indefinite array of possible courses of action.

Using English as a second language (ESL) classroom data, the present study traces the process by which language moments are discovered and transformed into pedagogical uptake in interaction. While the nature of classroom interactions varies according to the pedagogical focus of interactions (Park, 2013), the findings provide procedural accounts of four revealing cases that are distinctive in terms of who initiated each *language moment* and

how explicit these moments are. By tracing the participants' moves, this approach offers a perspective that complements the prior emphasis on the results of interactional modifications.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Repair vs. Correction

Research regarding interactional modification is premised on the presence of problematic L2 use. In applied linguistics, the term *repair* often refers to problematic L2 use (Kormos, 2000; Lyster, 2001; Morris, 2002; Nassaji, 2007; Radford, 2010; Schwartz, 1980), particularly to the replacement of language errors (Lyster, 2015; Mackey & Gass, 2006). Not all modifications, however, result in corrections of problematic usage, which makes it difficult to attribute all repair practices to instructional corrections (van Lier, 1988). Lyster (1998), for example, discovered that the function of recasts can be ambiguous. Likewise, Ellis and Sheen (2006) argued that recasts can take many forms and can perform diverse functions. What constitutes a *repair* and how it differs from a pedagogical *correction* thus needs clarification.

The distinction can be traced back to the seminar paper on repair by Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (1977), who noted the following:

The term *correction* is commonly understood to refer to the replacement of *error* or *mistake* by what is correct. The phenomena we are addressing, however, are neither contingent upon error, nor limited to replacement...we will refer to *repair* rather than *correction* in order to capture the more general domain of occurrence... we will refer to that which the repair addresses as the *repairable* or the *trouble source* (363).

In their conception, the trouble sources for repair are not limited to linguistic forms or functions. The question is what constitutes a *repairable* or a *trouble source* in conversational interaction.

According to Macbeth (2004), repair is oriented to the task of achieving a common understanding in the turn-by-turn progression of talk. In this account, repairs concern matters of understanding, which are evidenced by the production of appropriate next turns during talk exchanges (Moerman & Sacks, 1988). In the course of interactions, participants' repairs are directed to what the prior turn mean, what they call for, and/or what becomes problematic. Repairs are the outcomes of sense-making work through which participants determine the nature and scope of the trouble.

In contrast, *correction* refers to contingent actions that are designed to replace language errors or mistakes (Schegloff et al. 1977, p. 363). The use of corrections presumes the presence of correctible errors or mistakes in interactions. Notable in this regard is that identifying what to correct and determining what to do also involve contingent sense-making work; participants figure out what matters and how during their interactions. That is to say, discovering and acting on the problematic L2 use is a matter of understanding; corrective work is grafted onto the sense-making work of understanding (Macbeth, 2004). This is a difficult proposition to grasp especially when L2 research focuses on correcting incorrect L2 use. Even in the CA circle in applied linguistics, differentiating repair from correction has been controversial (Hall, 2007; Seedhouse, 2007a).

The following excerpt is designed to illustrate the difference between repair and correction. The data is taken from a large-scale observational study conducted by Llinares and Lyster (2014) who compared different types of corrective feedback (recasts, prompts and explicit corrections) across diverse instructional settings. This excerpt is supposed to demonstrate that the teacher's corrective action leads to successful uptake by the students. What the analysis does not describe is the sense-making process that is enacted during this series of repairs.

Excerpt 1

1. S: On Sunday I go to a
2. T: I went to
3. S: I go to a
4. T: I went
5. S: I went to a... how do you say exposicion?
6. T: Exposition, exhibition.
7. S: Exhibition and I find and I found a... a... person that that is
8. making with two,... with two... dos palos
9. T: She was making
10. S: She was making glass.

In describing the first two turns, Llinares and Lyster (2014) note that “the teacher’s initial recast is not repeated by the student and is instead followed by a needs-repair move containing the same error” (p. 189). Note how this remark presumes the presence of linguistic error. First, the teacher’s turn in line 2 is a correction of the prior turn in line 1. Since Llinares and Lyster only focused on correction, they treated the student’s turn in line 3 as a “needs-repair” because it “[contains] the same error.” Similarly, they characterized the teacher’s turn in line 4 as a “more explicit recast” because the teacher makes it “more salient by placing the correct verb in final position” (p. 189). To Llinares and Lyster, this

exchange simply involves detecting and correcting errors.

What was not described in their account was the series of repairs that carry sense-making works by the participants. First, the student's turn in line 3 is a repair that problematizes the teacher's hearing of the initial turn in line 1. Similarly, the teacher's subsequent turn in line 4 is also a repair that problematizes the student's hearing of the teacher's turn in line 2, conveying that his turn in line 2 was not a mishearing but a correction. It is only in line 5 that the student finally recognizes the action the teacher was performing in the sequence. Thus, while interactional modification was initiated, it was through the sense-making work of understanding that the participants discover its nature and determine the next course of action. In sum, repair generates sense-making work while corrections are often the result of that work.

One may argue that tracing sense-making work sequentially may not change the fact that the teacher's recast led to the student's correction of the problematic turn as Llinares and Lyster's (2014) description seems to indicate. This analysis, however, runs the risk of characterizing the sequence only in reference to the presence of linguistic problems, thereby treating it only as a matter of pedagogical feedback. This glosses over the contingent work of understanding that the participants deploy, including the student's attempt to clarify his/her earlier turn and the teacher's insistence in the exchange. Problematic L2 use does not make interactional exchanges pedagogical by default. Instead, through the sense-making works designed to achieve understanding, participants enact *language moments* that lead to interactional modification.

2.2. Language Moments to Learning Moments

Tracing the sequential organization of repair sequences reveals how participants' sense-making work unfolds. Not all language moments, however, are transformed into pedagogical uptake because participants in L2 interactions often focus on the larger goal of moving the conversation forward rather than on correcting errors made by nonnative speakers (Firth, 1996; Kurhila, 2001; Wong, 2005). In addition, native interactants often ignore learners' errors during their interactions (Gaskill, 1980).

This raises important questions, namely, what constitutes a *learning moment* and how can such moments be located? CA researchers in applied linguistics (He, 2004; Kasper, 2009a; Lee, 2010; Lee & Hellermann, 2014; Seedhouse, 2007b; Seedhouse, Walsh, & Jenks, 2010), including those pursuing a developmental agenda (Brouwer & Wagner, 2004; Cekaite, 2007; Hellermann, 2008; Ishida, 2009; Kasper, 2009b), have adopted diverse perspectives in addressing the issue of learning. Particularly notable are those researchers who have examined occasions on which "participants make learning the focal concern of their interaction" (Kasper & Wagner, 2011, p. 127).

Tracing these learning moments enables us to trace the participants in identifying the problematic language use and taking corrective action. A nonnative speaker of Japanese in Hosoda's (2006) research, for example, invited a native speaker to join in a word search task through repair initiation, then accommodated the suggested word into his/her own turn. In describing the activities in a math course in a Dutch school, Koole (2012) noted how this activity is organized as a "continuous process of making sense of the problem to be explained" (p. 1914).

Recognizing the relevance of sense-making work to learning moments makes it possible to see why interactional modification leads to modified output only partially in interactionists' research, often at an incidence of less than 50 percent (Braidı, 2002; Loewen & Philp, 2006; Nassaji, 2009; Oliver, 2000). The following case from Nassaji (2009, pp. 428-429) provides a good example of how interactional feedback regarding problematic L2 use may not be categorized as such.

Excerpt 2: Elicitation

1. S: ..on the street there was a policemen, and she was skipping running.
2. T: I am sorry, she was...?
3. S: Skipping running, the thief.

Excerpt 3: Recast

4. S: And they found out the one woman run away.
5. T: OK, the woman was running away.
6. S: Running away.

Excerpt 2 is a case of elicitation that "did not provide the learner with the correct form but rather elicited implicitly or explicitly a correction from the learner" (p. 428). In contrast, Excerpt 3 features a recast "that rephrased the learner's erroneous utterance into a targetlike form" (p. 428).

While these cases were coded as interactional modification, the argument they both show is dubious. For example, Nassaji features Excerpt 2 as a case that elicited "a correction from the learner" (p. 428). Note, however, that the teacher's turn in line 2 seems to be a repair initiation that points out what was problematic in the student's turn in line 1 by making the problematic turn incomplete (Koshik, 2002). The student is oriented to the repair in line 3 in which s/he clarifies what was said earlier by repeating "skipping running" while also clarifying the referent for the action, i.e., "the thief." While Nassaji (2009) treated the teacher's turn as a pedagogical correction, close analysis of the student's turn makes it hard to argue that this was a language moment only; the student was trying to clarify what s/he had said earlier.

In contrast, the teacher's turn in Excerpt 3 seems to involve more than a hearing problem. First, the teacher acknowledges the student's turn with "OK," and then makes an interactional modification by correcting part of what the student said, changing "run way" to "was running away." As it turns out, the student's response in line 6 is apparently oriented toward interactional modification as a pedagogical correction. First, the student repeats the part the teacher corrected, thus focusing on the language moment the teacher initiated. Second, the student's repetition focuses only on the part that was corrected in the teacher's turn, i.e., "running away." By replacing the problematic part only, the student's turn makes the occasion into a learning moment. While Nassaji's (2009) categories are premised on the presence of problematic L2 use, sequential analysis of these excerpts displays different organizational work by the participants in determining what to do with the problematic L2 use.

This comparison illustrates how the nature and scope of participants' actions in conversational interactions are much more diverse and complex than the prefigured analytic categories project. The question of what constitutes a learning moment is an empirical matter that must be answered by demonstrating the participants' orientation as such. That is to say, what matters is not just linguistic or functional patterns in interactional modifications but also what participants do with the problematic language use (Schegloff, 1997).

Recognizing this difference, the present study is designed to trace L2 classroom interaction in order to identify such moments in which participants discover and act on problematic L2 use. It examines a collection of cases in which L2 use is problematized and acted on by participants during teacher-fronted discussion in ESL contexts. The findings are classified into four categories according to the degree of explicitness with which these moments are identified and managed.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study's alternative approach proposes that tracing participants' sense-making work allows researchers to uncover and recover contingent choices made by participants in interactional modification. Learning moments are occasioned through such contingent work of understanding evidenced in subsequent next turn(s) at talk; their discovery, assumption, persistence, and even problems are enacted into sense-making work. This procedural account is often taken for granted in interactionists' analysis. For this reason, this alternative approach can provide a complementary perspective by specifying the nature of interactional modification and its effects in close details.

This study follows the precept of conversation analysis that traces the bury-by-turn progression of interactions (Sacks et al. 1974; Schegloff et al. 1977; Sidnell, 2013). Tracing

interactions this way helps recover and thus specify the choices and methods by which interactional modifications are managed. With this perspective in mind, the present study uncovered four different types of language moments. These cases were selected for their representative features in relation to two sets of criteria that are often used in interactionists' research, namely, who initiates language moments (self vs. other) and how these moments are handled (explicitly and implicitly).

3.1. Participants

The excerpts presented here are drawn from a data corpus that includes ESL composition courses and one speaking course. The composition course was designed to prepare international students for the writing tasks assigned in their content courses at a US university. The speaking class was part of an intensive English program for international students designed to develop their English-speaking skills. The composition classes lasted two hours, whereas the speaking classes lasted 90 minutes.

The students in these classes were mostly international students from East Asian or Middle Eastern countries. The students' speaking proficiency ranged from low to high-intermediate. They generally participated actively in the class discussions led by native teachers of English.

Two female native teachers of English participated in the study, one in the composition course and the other in the speaking course. Each has had extensive teaching experiences in the U.S. and abroad (more than five years). Each had taught at the university about three years at the time of data collection. Both teachers utilized a variety of classroom activities including lecturing, group activities and presentations, language games and text analyses. A substantial amount of class time was spent on class discussions in which the teacher led students in discussing the assigned reading, summarizing group discussions, teaching language forms, and even explaining assignments.

3.2. Procedures

The data were collected through video and audio recordings of 10 class sessions from the composition course and six class sessions from the speaking course, which were transcribed according to CA conventions (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984; Hepburn & Bolden, 2013). Transcribing offers a practical solution that captures the details of the social actions displayed by participants (Sacks, 1984). This does not mean that the transcripts reveal all aspects of the interactional choices made by participants. Rather, they allow analysts to delimit the scope of the data so that they can focus on tracing the participants' undertakings in their discourse.

All sessions were closely examined to identify occasions that involved language moments.

The four excerpts were selected for their telling qualities (Mitchell, 1984) in illustrating the kinds of contingent choices and methods of action that participants displayed in discovering problematic language use and transforming it into learning moment.

4. EXHIBITS

4.1. Teacher Initiated Language Moments: An Explicit Case

The first excerpt is taken from an ESL composition course in which the participants were discussing an assigned article that compares U.S. and East-Asian literacy education. The language moment comes later in the excerpt when the teacher makes an instructional correction by pointing out an inadequate language use by a student named Bernage. Note how the language moment is occasioned and then turned into a learning moment during the interaction. This case is an explicit language moment in that the teacher explains what the problem was and offers how to fix it.

Excerpt 4

129. T: what i:s she talk about=what was >kind of< typical for East-
 130. Asian (.) in terms of reading,
 131. (1.0)
 132. ▶ B: uh (0.5) we have to: (.) memorize thu: (text)¿
 133. (0.5)
 134. ▶ B: just like ah: (0.5) understandi^:ng (.) that the author i:s like
 135. ▶ ah: the: authorit^ies?
 136. (1.0)
 137. ▶ B: [that (0.5) () some kind of [aha::
 138. T: [oka:y^ [do you hear that Tommy or
 139. you are gonna <contⁱ^nue:> to page through it make noi:se,
 140. (0.5)
 141. T: what was he talking about over here, Taehong, could you
 142. hear him?
 143. (1.0)
 144. T: can I look for a different colored pen (0.5) (stall for) ti:me,
 145. [((Looking for marker for the blackboard))
 146. what was hi:s (.) po:int?
 147. (1.0)
 148. T: can you hear him over here?

149. L: which one,
 150. T: ah::v all right.
 151. M: ()
 152. T: () Berna:rge?
 153.▶B: uh:: in, () the:: East Asian stude:nts, (.) they have to: like
 154.▶ memorize the te:xt, because that's (.) kind of understanding in
 155.▶ the e:- in the ea:stɿ (0.5) the author is like (.) uh:: creating
 156.▶ some kind of la:w (.) by writing a boo:kɿ
 157.▶T: okay, so the auth:or ((writing on the board "author")) author
 158.▶ is creating uh what?
 159.▶B: uh, (.) like some kind of (.) la:w?
 160.▶T: ((continue to write and then turn around to look B))
 161. (0.5)
 162.▶B: I read it somewhere.
 163. (0.5)
 164.▶T: la:w? (.) what about (.) is this (.) authority an:[d you used this
 165. B: [yeah.
 166.▶T: word befo:re. ((writing on the board)) law: is like, the speed
 167. limit is <sixty fi:ve.> (.) you must wear your seat belt. (.)
 168. okay. so she talked abo:ut (.) memorization as strategies,
 169. understanding (.) 'n understanding that the author is an
 170. autho:rity, (.) what else did she talk about,

In line 129-130, the teacher asks the student cohort to identify the typical features of reading instruction in East-Asian countries, which were described in the assigned article.

Bernage from Indonesia offers "we have to memorize the text" in line 132. A silent turn ensues in line 133, indicating that the teacher's third turn evaluation is delayed in the IRE (Initiation-Response-Evaluation) sequence (Macbeth, 2003; Mehan, 1979; Nassaji & Wells, 2000; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). In response, Bernage offers the additional explanation, "the author is like the authorities" in lines 134-135.

The lack of response from the teacher prompts Bernage to repair again in line 137. This attempt is initially overlapped with the teacher's "oka:yɿ" in line 138. In the subsequent turns, however, the teacher is oriented to different matters, reproaching other students and looking for a marker. In line 152, the teacher finally resumes the questioning sequence by nominating Bernage again.

While the intervening turns were not directly related to what he had said earlier, Bernage still makes some changes in his answers in line 153. First, he changes the initial "we" (132) to "East-Asian students," and then, to the anaphoric "they" in the subsequent turn. This move

seems to have the effect of generalizing the referent (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998) from personal attribution. Second, Bernage's answer is produced through a multi-unit turn (Lerner, 1991) that consists of a main clause ("they have to memorize the text") and a subordinate clause that begins with "because" in lines 153-156. This complex sentence seems to consolidate all the answers that he had produced in his earlier turns in lines 132 and 134-135. Third, his comment that the "author is creating a law" is an upgraded version of his prior attribution in line 135. Bernage's answer here, therefore, reflects his on-going sense-making work as to what the teacher's delayed responses implicate.

In line 157, the teacher finally produces her response to Bernage's answer with "okay" and then by beginning to write the answer on the board in line 157. In so doing, she initiates a repair by asking "author is creating uh what?" as a partial repeat (Liebscher & Dailey-O'Cain, 2003). Bernage treats this as a hearing problem and thus repairs his answer by repeating the problematic part, "some kind of law" in line 159. The teacher continues to write the answer but then turns around to look at Bernage in line 160. This gesture seems to be a repair initiation (Seo & Koshik, 2010).

Note that Bernage's response in line 161 is delayed, indicating trouble. In the next turn, Bernage decides to explain how he came up with the answer. The teacher's response is again delayed in line 163, another precursor of the dispreferred response. Finally, in line 164, the teacher comments on the answer by beginning a repair initiation regarding the word "law" that is quickly followed by a correction that proposes "authority" as a replacement for "law." To that point, the exchange concerned the content of Bernage's answer. In line 164, however, the discussion becomes about problematic L2 use, thus making the occasion a language moment.

This conversion to a language moment occurs through the teacher's sense-making work. First, she decides to expose the problem with Bernage's answer (Jefferson, 1987) by offering the alternative expression "authority" in line 164. This implies that the teacher understands what Bernage's answer means. Second, the teacher also notes that the correct form "authorities" was a term that Bernage had already used earlier "you used this word before" in lines 164-166. Third, the teacher's correction is performed through elaborate accounting practices in which she offers comparative examples of when and how to use "authority" and "laws."

Notice how Bernage responds to this language moment. After hearing the corrective action, he responds with "yeah" in line 165, which overlaps with the teacher's account. This remark displays his sense-making work, realizing that what matters now is not the content but the language use. The teacher's corrective action has activated a language moment, which is transformed into a learning moment by Bernage's acknowledgment.

In interactionists' studies, language moments are identified in reference to the presence of language problems and types of interactional modification. Accordingly, these studies do

not explicate how repairables are discovered and addressed during interactional sequences. Our alternative approach may fill this gap by providing procedural accounts of how language moments are activated and addressed by the participants. Tracing the contingent sense-making work allows us to identify the interpretive choices participants make; their understanding, assumptions, rationale, problems, and even persistence are reflexively undertaken in subsequent turns, and this is what makes language moments possible. In other words, language moments are grafted onto the sense-making works through which the nature of language moments is identified and addressed.

4.2. Teacher Initiated Language Moments: An Implicit Case

The prior section demonstrates a conversion to a language moment that was explicitly initiated by a classroom teacher. The explicitness is displayed in how the teacher's correction isolated the moment by "making of it an interactional business in its own right" (Jefferson, 1987, p. 97) with an elaborate account for her corrective action. Not all language moments, however, involves such an explicit marking.

The following excerpt is a case in point; in it, a language moment was exposed only briefly before the ongoing conversation resumed. The excerpt is taken from the same composition course. Here, the teacher and her students were about to discuss some characters featured in an assigned story. The students had just finished writing a sentence describing one of the characters, and the teacher is about to write it on the board for class discussion. James (J) volunteers his sentence in line 187, and the teacher began writing it on the board.

Excerpt 5

185. T: okay, rea:d me your WHO::le sentence, from the begi:ning.
 186. [((Erase the board))
 187. J: okay in my opinion Schemmer is discrimi[nate against-
 188. T: [hang:: on
 189. i:n mai: opi::nio:n^ (.) Schemm:er↑ (.) what?
 190. [((Writes "In my opinion, Schmmer"))
 191. (0.5)
 192.▶ J: ah (.) Schemmer i:s (.) aga:n- (.) >Schemmer is discriminate
 193.▶ [((looking his note))
 194.▶ T: [((writes "is"))
 195.▶ J: against Ginangos.<
 196.▶ T: [((erases "is"))
 197.▶ T: Schemme:r (.) dis:cri::mi::ate^s? >discriminates is a ver:b,< (.)
 198.▶ [((writing "discriminates"))

199. ▶ T: discriminates?
 200. (0.5)
 201. ▶ J: Schemmer i:s.
 202. ▶ T: I'm correcting your grammar [as we go,
 203. ▶ J: [Okay.
 204. T: Schemm:er discriminates agai:nst,
 205. J: Ginangos.
 206. T: Ginango:↑s.(.) ((writing "Ginangos")) is that it?
 207. J: Yeah.

James begins to say his sentence in line 187, and the teacher writes "In my opinion, Schemmer" on the board subsequently. Then the teacher initiates a repair in lines 189-190 to get the rest of the sentence. James begins to offer his answer in line 192, but the final version of the sentence is produced through a series of repairs as he consults his notebook in line 193.

The teacher resumes writing by adding "is" to the board in line 194. As she listens to James' answer, however, the teacher erases "is" in line 196 and instead writes "discriminates" in line 198. This is a corrective action that prompts a language moment. Given that the other correction involved an accounting practice that mitigated its force (Jefferson, 1987), this account is made in a suppressed manner. First, her statement that "discriminates is a verb" is produced as running commentary in a faster pace in line 197. Second, the teacher quickly resumes her request for James' sentence in line 199. Thus, the corrective action is produced in a flurry of repair actions through which the teacher identifies what to write; corrective action is thus grafted onto sense-making work.

However, James does not treat this as a correctional move. While the teacher's repair initiation calls for the next part of the sentence, James' response in line 201 offers a different kind of repair: he corrects the teacher's sentence, indicating that the teacher omitted "is" in her writing. Here, James' sense-making is about correcting a clerical mistake by the teacher in writing down his sentence.

This mismatch leads the teacher to expose the problem in the subsequent turn in line 202. By exposing it, the teacher re-enacts the language moment she raised in line 197. This is a repair that has the effect of exposing and thus explaining the action sequence she produced regarding James' language use. James quickly acknowledges this in his overlapped turn in line 203. With this comment, the teacher resumes her task of calling for the rest of the sentence from James in line 204.

This excerpt pulls a different kind of language moment into view. While the corrective action in the previous excerpt involves exposing inadequate language use explicitly, the language moment in the above excerpt is simply embedded as a running commentary by the

teacher into the ongoing action. This matter becomes clearer because James problematized the teacher's hearing, not the problematic language use.

This excerpt demonstrates that the presence of linguistic problems and interactional modifications do not render themselves for pedagogical uptake. The problematic L2 use is subject to the sense-making work by which participants negotiate the nature and scope of the language moment; the embedded correction, running commentary, repair initiation and accounting practices all contribute to this negotiating practice.

4.3. Student Initiated Language Moments: An Explicit Case

The two excerpts below represent cases in which language moments are initiated by students, placing them outside the boundaries of traditional IRE sequence (Waring, 2009). The excerpt below begins with a question by a student about a word, which the teacher then develops into prolonged discussion. The excerpt is taken from an ESL speaking course in which a native teacher leads class discussions with international students from Japan, South Korea, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Here, the teacher is going through the vocabulary items presented in the textbook.

Excerpt 6

115. T: all right. (.) so:, (.) take a look here: I want to see if you
 116. wan- I want to make sure you understand all:: (.) the
 117. vocabulary, in letter A: it sa:ys, it's (0.5) throw:n (.)
 118. throu:gh the aw:ning, pot- flower pot is thrown through
 119. the awni:ng, what's 'n awning¿
 120. (3.0)
 121. T: what's the awning,
 122. (6.0)
 123. S?: ([)
 124. K: [Prevent ur:: ah sunlight?
 125. T: all right, yea:h, it's this (.) excellent- it- excellent, Kiho:ng^
 126. [((pointing to the overhead))
 127. it's this area right here, this area that protects the sunlight¿
 128. just like what Kihong sa:id, (.h) from coming into window,
 129. it also protects ra:in >things like that< .h so the flower
 130. pot is thrown (.) through the awning¿ (.) right? all right, hum:
 131. (.) there i:s a cake (.) of ice, (.) what's a cake of i:ce,
 132. (1.5)
 133. O: part (.) of ice.

134. T: yeah, it's a <bi::g (.) chunk (.) of i:ce,> very good, Obai^
 135. [(Gesturing with two hands))
 136. okay? so th:is (.) is the cake (.) of ice, all right, hm:: (1.0)
 137. what el:seǀ
 138. (2.0)
 139.▶ M: excuse me?
 140. T: yea:h?
 141. (0.5)
 142.▶ M: what is the synonym of (.) awning,
 143.▶ T: awning?
 144.▶ (0.5)
 145.▶ T: ah:: (.) window sha:deǀ
 146.▶ (1.0)
 147.▶ T: awni- awning really there is- (.) it's a very popular ter:m, and
 148.▶ you see this o:n American houses often,
 149.▶ (0.5)
 150.▶ T: you probably just didn't pay attention to what the word was.
 151.▶ (0.5)
 152.▶ T: all right, so: (.) window sha:deǀ
 153.▶ M: window shade?
 154. T: hm hm ah:: (2.0) the cord, what is cord, (.) what is cord,

The teacher initial question is about “awning” from the sentence “flower pot is thrown through the awning” in line 119. Two students offer answers that the teacher accepts before providing an additional account in lines 127-130. In the next turn, the teacher moves onto the next item and settles it in line 135-136. Then, she is ready to take on the next item by asking “what el:seǀ” in line 137.

The student cohort does not answer, which creates a two second silence in line 138. Then, one student Minhø asks a question about “awning” in the later sequence. Since the discussion about this topic has already been completed, it takes some interactional work for him to reinstate it. First, Minhø begins with “excuse me?” in line 139. This remark indicates a pre-sequence (Schegloff, 1980) whose primary function is to secure a turn to speak. Second, Minhø asks for a synonym for “awning,” not its meaning. This question, therefore, initiates a language moment that focused on a vocabulary issue. After a brief repair sequence to clarify the question in lines 143-144, the teacher offers the synonym *window shade* in line 145 in response to the language moment.

The next turn in line 146, however, is a silent turn as Minhø does not show any visible acknowledgement of the synonym offered by the teacher. Thus, the teacher provides an

additional account in lines 147-148, explaining how “awning” is a popular term and how awnings are often seen on American houses. Notable here is that the teacher’s answer is not about “window shade” but rather about “awning.” This answer, therefore, reflects the sense-making work that led her to recognizing what prompted Minhø to ask for a synonym; his synonym question was designed to figure out what “awning” was, not to learn about synonyms.

Despite the teacher’s effort, Minhø remains silent in line 149. This leads the teacher to further explain why the word “awning” looks unfamiliar to the students, saying “You probably just didn’t pay attention to what the word was.” This account reflects the teacher’s effort to respond to the language moment Minhø’s question raised.

Even with the additional account, Minhø gives no visible acknowledgment from Minhø in line 151. Accordingly, the teacher decides to end the sequence by repeating the answer “window shade” in line 152. Finally, Minhø produces a response in line 153, initiating another repair. This is a delayed repair initiation (Wong, 2000) searching for confirmation. Minhø’s clarification request in line 153, therefore, initiates a learning moment explaining how the meaning of *awning* is to be understood.

This excerpt brings into view a language moment in which problematic language use is explicitly raised and addressed. The nature of the use is progressively determined over the course of the sense-making work as the student tries to figure out what the word refers to. While asking for a definition of the word is a common practice in the classroom, the teacher comes to realize, through Minhø’s repeated silences, that the student is not so much looking for a synonym as seeking clarification regarding the word *awning*. For this reason, the teacher’s comments about the word become progressively elaborate and explicit until the student shows acknowledgment.

4.4. Student Initiated Language Moments: An Implicit Case

The next excerpt illustrates a case in which a language moment is captured through the students’ inadvertent display of appreciation for particular language usage by the teacher. This excerpt features those rare moments in which a learning moment occurs without explicit instructional accounts. The teacher begins by trying to elicit an answer about the similarities between two assigned articles.

Excerpt 7

362. T: this is a good strategy, (0.5) to sit down with whatever you
 363. have to work with,
 364. (0.5)
 365. T: especially if you know you are going to compare it.

366. (0.5)
 367. T: right, (.) and from the:re, (.) look at the very basic (2.0) see:
 368. what is the:re^ (1.0) see how it might work together.
 369. (0.5)
 370. ▶ T: now, are there (.) any (.) similarities up there,
 371. (1.0)
 372. ▶ T: we know there are million differences=are there anything:,
 373. (0.5)
 374. ▶ Ju: mil(hh)lion [differences.
 375. T: [similar?
 376. ▶ T: huh? ((Look Ju))
 377. ▶ Ju: ((turn his head away from the teacher's direction))
 378. ▶ T: a million differences=are there any similarities?
 379. (3.0)
 380. B: no.
 381. (1.0)
 382. Ja: yeah(h), (people) from China.
 383. (2.0)
 384. T: o[kay:,
 385. ▶ Ju: [Everything is different.=
 386. T: =is that a similarity?
 387. Ja: that's difference.
 388. T: that could be: you know:
 389. Ju: every[thing is different.
 390. T: [could we have: (.) what do we have, we have Japanese

The segment begins with the teacher explaining the procedures for comparing the assigned articles in lines 362-368. Then, in line 370, she asks the students to identify similarities between the two assigned articles.

No student volunteers a response. In the next turn in line 372, the teacher makes a comment indicating that identifying differences might be easier, “we know there are million differences.” This is a passing remark; the teacher quickly resumes her call for similarities by saying, “are there anything” in the same line. The teacher’s turn is not yet complete as she is searching for what to say next, stretching out her word, “anything:,” which creates a brief pause in the subsequent line.

In the next turn in line 374, one student (Ju) blurts out an exclamation “mil(hh)lion differences.” This turn seems to be designed not as a response to the teacher’s comment but as an act of noticing the teacher’s particular language use. Ju’s turn prompted the teacher to

look in Ju's direction in line 376, initiating a repair whose target is not clear (Drew, 1997). Knowing that the repair is directed toward him, Ju turns his head away from the teacher's direction, opting out of the turn taking.

Ju's exclamation was produced in response to the teacher's particular language usage, which makes the occasion a language moment. Ju's action in line 377, however, indicates that his appreciation of the language moment is not intended to trigger a conversational exchange. In other words, Ju inadvertently prompted a language moment without starting an explicit pedagogical exchange.

This moment is not completed there. In the next turn in line 378, the teacher repeats the phrase that elicited Ju's exclamation. This indicates that the teacher recognizes what part of her turn prompted a response from the student. By repeating the phrase, the teacher seems to increase the likelihood of its uptake by the students. Interestingly, later in the sequence, Ju recognizes that there are indeed many differences between the two articles in line 385.

This excerpt illustrates a case in which a language moment is embedded in an action sequence without being exposed to explicit corrective action. This case demonstrates that learning moments can manifest in much more complex and diverse ways than previously suspected. L2 learners discover, rationalize, and undertake what they learn in the course of their interactions.

5. CONCLUSION

The interactionists' focus on interactional modification is based on the presence of problematic L2 use. Conversational interactions are examined with the aim of clarifying the effects of interactional feedback on the modified output (Braid, 2002; Loewen & Philp, 2006; Nassaji, 2009; Oliver, 2000). However, not all problematic L2 use lead to pedagogical correction. Participants are not always oriented to language moments in conversational interactions as they come to terms with the contingent array of possible meanings each next turn occasions.

It seems premature, therefore, to uniformly attribute problematic L2 use to pedagogical corrections. Participants' interpretive choices in interaction are much more diverse and selective than those implicated in the pre-defined categories posed in interactionists' research. In this regard, Schegloff's (2006, pp. 81-82) argument is notable:

Talking in interaction is about constructing actions, which is why it does not reduce to language; treating talk in interaction only for its properties as a system of symbols or a medium for articulation or deploying propositions does not get at its core.

The interactionists' approach has been successful in systematically identifying and classifying the problematic L2 use by mapping out schematic relations among relevant constructs.

These constructs, however, cannot retrieve all the choices participants display. Rather, they offer a useful starting point for descriptive analysis in tracing participants' choices of actions and methods of talk. Interactional modification is a selective action chosen out of a vast array of options that all participants have in the indefinite field of conversational exchange (Garfinkel, 1967). For example, corrective recast is often embedded or enacted into contingent sense-making tasks through which participants determine what a prior turn means, what it calls for, what it implies, and what becomes problematic. Participants make contingent choices in identifying language moments and transforming them into learning moments out of many other available options. Tracing these choices sequentially offers a useful explication of the process by which interactional modification is recognized and thus managed in L2 conversational exchanges.

It is important, therefore, to specify and trace sense-making work by participants as doing so reveals how they discover and address the nature and character of L2 use. This approach has the effect of directing our analytic focus toward what the participants experience in conversational interactions regarding problematic L2 use. When examined this way, L2 interactions illuminate the choices participants make and the methods they use in deciding what to do with problematic L2 use. This could be applied to a diverse array of interactional topics such as teacher talk (Kunitz, Markee & Sert, 2021), nonnative discourse (Olsher, 2000) or even storytelling (Lee, 2022). This is an attempt to attain an adequate grasp of the understanding that is intrinsic to the production of social action (Lynch, 2001) that is meaningful and relevant to the course of actions in which participants engage. Tracing participants' choices sheds light on the nature of pedagogical work and the agendas, assumptions, insinuations, problems, and solutions that manifest in the course of interactional sequences.

Applicable level: Tertiary

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