Book reviews

CONVERSATION ANALYSIS AND SECOND LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY: A GUIDE FOR ESL/EFL TEACHERS
Wong, J., & Waring, H.Z
New York: Routledge, 2021

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Coming 11 years after its initial publication date of 2010, this newly updated second edition of *Conversation analysis and second language pedagogy: A guide for ESL/EFL teachers* is an immensely practical and easy-to-use resource for language teachers looking to incorporate the findings of conversation analysis (CA) into their pedagogical practice. The authors begin with an introduction to CA, explaining how it starts with the careful analysis of recordings of real-world interactions and aims to produce descriptions of how conversation works from the perspective of everyday members of society. They argue that in order to be able to teach ESL students how to have conversations in English, it is vital that we first study real-world conversation to reveal the "systematic verbal and nonverbal methods participants use to engage in social interaction." (Wong & Waring, 2021, p.8). These methods, or as the authors refer to them, *interactional practices*, are the building blocks of *interactional competence* (IC), and include abilities like being able to take a turn at an appropriate time in a conversation, being able to disagree with someone while still sounding polite and respectful, or being able to tell a story that fits comfortably into the surrounding conversation.

The book is intended to be used as a textbook in TESOL and applied linguistics courses, or simply as a resource for ESL teachers or curriculum designers looking to develop their skills. It sets out to firstly describe and explain a large number of the interactional practices that students need to be familiar with in order to be able to have successful conversations in English, and secondly, to provide usable, classroom-ready resources for teaching these same practices. In the first chapter, the authors build an argument for the value of

using CA research to inform L2 (second language) teaching practice. They contend that, in order to make IC teachable, we need, in the first place, a detailed specification of the various interactional practices from which it is built. To this end, they propose a heuristic theoretical model of the hierarchical relationships between these practices. At the base of the model lie *turn-taking practices*. These are the kinds of practices that help us, for example, anticipate exactly when we might appropriately come in to take the floor in a conversation, or manipulate the timing of a turn to show that we agree with the previous speaker's opinion. The next level up consists of *sequencing practices*. These are what allow us to combine individual turns into conversational chunks that perform specific social actions like complaining, giving advice, or asking for help. At the third level are *overall structuring practices*, and this refers to the methods used to organise the framework of a whole conversation. As an example, the authors describe the surprisingly complex and highly regular practices that we use to open up a conversation on the phone or bring a face-to-face interaction to a close. At the fourth and final level lie *repair practices*. These are interwoven throughout the three other levels of the model and refer to the ways we get a conversation back on track when some problem with mutual understanding emerges.

The authors use these four major levels within their proposed model to organise the structure of the book. They start with two chapters covering turn-taking practices, followed by four chapters on sequencing practices, then a further three chapters on overall structuring practices, and finally, two chapters that deal with the organisation of repair. Each of these 11 chapters is composed of two complementary sections. In the first section of each chapter, the authors synthesize decades of CA findings on a certain aspect of interactional organisation (for example, how storytelling works, or how openings work in telephone calls), to present a well-structured and clear description of the underlying structure of that particular element of conversation. In the second part of each chapter, the authors provide a selection of practical classroom activities that can be used to teach the interactional practices described in the preceding section.

As mentioned above, the book is a second edition of a work originally published in 2010. Potential readers may well then ask what is new in this updated version. Some minor changes have been made to the structure of the book, which mainly come in the form of

previously longer chapters being split up into more easily "digestible" (Wong & Waring, 2021, p.xii) chunks. Major updates have been made to the earlier parts of the chapters where the authors describe the various interactional practices that form the basis of IC. In some instances, these descriptions have been improved and expanded upon by reference to new studies carried out in the intervening 11 years since the original publication date. In other instances, completely new descriptions have been added based on recent research. For example, a new section deals with face-to-face conversational openings, which is informed almost entirely by recent research on this topic.

By far the standout strength of the book is its immediately apparent practical usefulness for teachers who are interested in incorporating CA findings into their teaching. The authors synthesize CA findings from hundreds of studies in a way that is logical, clear and easily accessible to ESL professionals who are interested in bringing an interactional perspective into their teaching, but are not formally trained in CA. A real highlight is the discussion of those areas of everyday talk where ESL textbooks give advice that is incomplete, lacking in nuance or, in some cases, flat out misleading. Another strength of the book is the inclusion of the various tasks sprinkled through each of the chapters. Intended as an ongoing understanding check of the content just presented, the tasks are well-designed. Unfortunately, however, no answer keys are provided for these tasks. This is a regrettable oversight and the inclusion of answers would be particularly helpful for teachers looking to use the book as a course textbook.

Arguably another weakness of the book, and one that is likely to be of particular interest to readers of this special issue, is the fact that it does not discuss any interactional practices that are specific to online interactions. Therefore, teachers looking for guidance on how to help their ESL students with communication in settings like Zoom meetings or workplace WhatsApp groups will have to do their best to extrapolate existing findings on face-to-face and telephone communication to these digital contexts. Given that so much of our communication happens online in modern life, a discussion of the specifics of how interaction works in these settings would be a worthy addition to any future third edition.

In short, this book sets out to be a practical guide for ESL/EFL teachers who are interested in using CA to inform their teaching

practices and it succeeds emphatically in achieving this goal. The authors make an important and compelling contribution to encouraging a shift towards an empirically based interactionist perspective in L2 pedagogy.

References

Wong, J., & Waring, H.Z. (2021). *Conversation analysis and second language pedagogy: A guide for ESL/EFL teachers.* New York: Routledge.