

Introduction: Nonnative Discourse

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...understanding how nonnative speaking participants make their way in interaction needs to start with what is generally the case in the talk and other conduct in interaction...

—Schegloff, 2000, p. 234

This special issue of *ial* on nonnative discourse includes new conversation analytic research as well as an interview of Emanuel Schegloff addressing theoretical and methodological considerations in using conversation analysis to study nonnative discourse.¹ Conversation analysis (CA) is an ethnomethodological branch of sociology which views the micro-interactional practices of naturally occurring talk-in-interaction as fundamental social structures that are susceptible, via recording and transcription, to detailed empirical analysis. Though CA has been a part of the interdisciplinary community of applied linguistics for many years, only in recent years has a body of CA research on nonnative discourse begun to emerge. As will be discussed below, there has also been growing discussion of the ways that CA may be used to critique or contribute to various areas of applied linguistics. The articles in this issue focus on the sequential organization and turn-taking practices in nonnative discourse.

The term *nonnative discourse* is used here to refer to talk and interaction in which one or more participants are not native speakers of the language being used. Nonnative discourse includes a diversity of languages spoken, linguistic and cultural backgrounds of participants, configurations of speakers, and social and cultural contexts of interaction. The scope of what may be considered as nonnative discourse is reflected in the articles in this issue, which include native-nonnative speaker (NS-NNS) interaction—a kind of intercultural communication—as well as nonnative-nonnative speaker (NNS-NNS) interaction—which may also be considered *lingua franca* talk. The articles include analysis of English as well as Japanese discourse, foreign language as well as second language contexts, and casual conversation as well as talk in an institutional context.

One domain of nonnative discourse that has been the focus of substantial research is teacher-fronted classroom interaction, building on the work of Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) and Mehan (1979, 1985), among others. As a practical choice for this special issue, teacher-fronted classroom discourse was excluded from the scope of research considered in order to provide a forum for research on nonnative speaker interaction in a range of other contexts, including casual conversation as

well as interaction in various other educational and institutional settings. This choice was not based on any notion that teacher-fronted lessons are less real or important than what goes on in other institutional settings, such as doctor office visits or job interviews. In fact, the expansion of the contexts in which we study nonnative discourse may, ultimately, contribute to our understanding of nonnative speaker participation in teacher-fronted educational interactions.

Given the diverse and at times conflicting applied linguistics research agendas, methodologies, and epistemological stances surrounding the study of second language acquisition and interlanguage, this issue of *ial* focuses on nonnative speaker talk-in-interaction as a research focus in its own right, as part of the social and cultural fabric of the world, a domain worthy of understanding even apart from the concerns language educators, testers, and acquisition theorists. Nonnative discourse *happens*, it is a fact of life, and it is worth investigating from a discourse perspective, within its indigenous social and interactional habitats. Of course, such research is likely to contribute to our understanding of the communicative competence, and in particular the interactional competence, of nonnative speakers. Broadly speaking, research on nonnative discourse is concerned with communicative competence in socially situated communication. The point is that this research may find its own questions in the examination of the data of talk and the social action of which it is a part.

What, then, are the issues in studying nonnative discourse? The basic underlying questions include: 1) What are the discursive practices, sequential organization, and patterns of participation we find in nonnative discourse? 2) How do these practices and organizational patterns differ from what is found in native speaker interaction? 3) Are there practices associated with speakers from particular linguistic or cultural backgrounds, particular languages of communication, or particular social contexts? 4) How and when are the cultural and social identities of native and nonnative speakers manifested in the discursive practices of nonnative speaker interaction? Of course these are very broad questions, ones which need not be the starting point of empirical investigations. Certainly, from a conversation analytic perspective, the research should begin with observations of actual data rather than with a series of questions. These questions more generally describe a domain of interest and may be considered from a variety of perspectives, including a sociological interest in the organization of talk and social action, an anthropological interest in discursive practices as a locus of culture, or a functional interest in the role of linguistic structures in social context.

Ultimately, a broader and more detailed understanding of nonnative speaker interaction may inform studies of interlanguage use and development, assessment and pedagogy. The articles in this issue should certainly be seen in the context of the ongoing research areas of applied linguistics, even if the authors do not situate their studies *within* these areas.

APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND NONNATIVE DISCOURSE

Insights from discourse analysis have long played a part in applied linguistic research. Varieties of discourse analysis including linguistic pragmatics, coherence and cohesion, speech act theory, and CA have, over the years, been exploited by researchers in the study of second (or foreign) language acquisition, language assessment, and language use. Much of this work has been influenced, at least in part, by models of communicative competence (Bachman, 1990; Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1972), and more recently researchers have begun to advocate a focus on interactional competence (He & Young, 1998; Markee, 2000).

Interlanguage pragmatics is one research area concerned with the acquisition of the social uses of language; a primary focus is on the use and acquisition of social, pragmatic, and linguistic aspects of speech act behavior (such as requesting, apologizing, or complaining) by nonnative speakers, compared to a baseline of native—or highly proficient nonnative—speaker norms (e.g., Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993). Though most interlanguage pragmatics research has been carried out through the elicitation of written reports of hypothetical discourse choices rather than through the study of naturally occurring talk-in-interaction, researchers in the field have also expressed an interest in the sequential organization of speech act behavior that can only be studied through an examination of spontaneous spoken discourse (Kasper & Dahl, 1991).

Discourse has been a major interest in second language acquisition (SLA) research as well. Focus on the role of spoken interaction in the acquisition of linguistic structures dates back to Hatch's 1976 discourse theory and proposals about the value of negotiation of meaning for SLA (Long, 1983; Long & Porter, 1985; Varonis & Gass, 1985). SLA researchers have been interested in spoken communication for the kinds of input, output (Swain, 1985), or interaction that are thought to facilitate acquisition. Recently, some researchers have also begun to focus on the role of language play (such as jokes, riddles, rhymes, and word games) in acquisition (e.g., Cook, 2000; Tarone, 1999); though language play may include highly organized and ritualized activities, one of its indigenous habitats is talk-in-interaction in everyday life. What characterizes most research on discourse from SLA perspectives is a theoretically defined interest in particular qualities or elements of discourse that are deemed valuable for acquisition, rather than a primary interest in their part in the situated, natural use of language. An orientation to isolating factors that promote acquisition also extends to considerations of social context. According to Tarone (2000), the main focus of interlanguage research on social context is on the "impact of social factors on the psycholinguistic processes of acquisition of specific interlanguage morphosyntactic, lexical, and phonological forms" (p. 193). While there is an interest in discourse and social context in such SLA research, an *a priori* selection and attempt to isolate variables generally cannot take into consideration the participants' orientations to—and local, interactional construction of—the discourse and social context.

Discourse analytic perspectives on nonnative interaction have also been connected with language acquisition in recent years through a critique of traditional SLA methodology from the perspectives of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis (Markee, 1994; Firth & Wagner, 1996) and sociolinguistics and ethnography of speaking (Rampton, 1995). These critiques have stimulated a debate over, on the one hand, whether traditional psychometric approaches to SLA research can properly account for the ways language is used by NNS in sequentially and socially situated social contexts, and on the other hand, what exactly micro-analytic and ethnographic tools of discourse analysis can contribute to understandings of the psycholinguistic process of language acquisition (e.g., Firth & Wagner, 1997; Gass, 1998; Kasper, 1997a; Long, 1997).

Also related to this debate are socially situated views of language acquisition. Vygotskian approaches to language learning, or socio-cultural theory (Hall, 1993; Lantolf & Appel, 1994) have focused attention on learning as a social process, with a major emphasis on the notion of “scaffolding,” and the social practices that foster language learning. While some of this work has turned its attention primarily to theory, studies have also focused on the discursive practices in interaction in educational contexts. Another strand of acquisition research concerned with discourse of language learners is the field of language socialization, a research domain originally concerned with child language development (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1986), but which has been taken up by researchers concerned with second language learning as well, including Poole (1992), and Ohta (in press), who integrates a Vygotskian view with a language socialization perspective on the role of interactional routines in language learning. Situated communication is a primary focus of language socialization, so research on second language learning from this perspective is naturally tied to the close analysis of interactions involving nonnative speakers.

Recently, some researchers have made a case for ways in which conversation analysis may be able to contribute to the further development of SLA. Markee (2000) argues that conversation analysis of second language data can help to ground empirical claims about language learning and social interaction and can reveal “important details of the SLA landscape that other methodologies would otherwise leave blank” (p. 162). In a study of delayed next-turn repair initiation by nonnative speakers, Wong (2000a) suggests that attention to turn taking, sequential organization of talk, and adjacency—as opposed to a focus on linguistic forms—may be able to contribute to interactionist SLA research since it can provide a grounding for claims about the interactional understandings that are demonstrated by the participants to one another within interactions (p. 264).

Micro-interactional analysis of naturally occurring nonnative discourse has been argued to be relevant in other areas of applied linguistics as well, including language assessment (Jacoby & McNamara, 1999)—and in particular the oral as-

assessment interview (e.g., Egbert, 1998; He, 1998; Riggenbach, 1998)—as well as the study of communication strategies (Firth & Wagner, 1997; Rampton, 1997). Overall, a thematic focus on nonnative discourse can be seen as relevant to a wide range of research areas in applied linguistics.

PROBLEMS WITH THE NOTION OF NONNATIVE DISCOURSE

What is being advocated here is an agenda of research on nonnative discourse which may be relevant to the concerns of other areas of applied linguistics but which evolves independently of the orientations and research questions of prior work in SLA and other fields. The notion of *nonnative* discourse itself, however, carries with it assumptions that can be problematic. First of all, the term itself encodes a bipolar, *native* versus *nonnative* speaker distinction rooted in the primary interest of applied linguistics and second and foreign language education. This term provides a useful way to distinguish the learning and use of a mother tongue from the learning and use of additional languages, but it also may be seen as over-simplifying the reality of a diverse range of speakers, and even the complex reality of individual speakers as they participate in talk and social interaction. Schegloff (this issue) cautions against the danger of nonnative speaker identity being simply “insisted” into the data by the predispositions of researchers without concern for the particular practices and orientations of the participants.

In fact, language researchers with a variety of perspectives have questioned the label of nonnative speaker. From the viewpoint of interlanguage pragmatics, Kasper (1997b, c) has questioned whether the notion of a native speaker is valid as a standard against which the communicative competence of language learners should be measured, because by its very nature it sets an unrealistic, if not impossible, goal and frames the language learner as inherently deficient. Moreover, Carroll (this issue) criticizes the nonnative speaker label, in part because of its uncertain relevance to the participants, but also because of the monolithic nature of the notion of nonnative, which lumps together speakers with a wide range of language abilities. He further raises the objection that in an increasingly multilingual, multicultural world, the notion of the monolingual native speaker itself is something of a myth, and the native/nonnative speaker distinction becomes increasingly murky.² To avoid the pitfalls of the nonnative speaker label, Carroll adopts a more specific and informative label—“novice level L2”—for his data.

The concept of nonnative speaker, no matter how we might seek to broaden its focus, encodes an analytic distinction which may oversimplify or misrepresent the complexity of the ways language is used by speakers of various linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In addition, the focus in this issue is limited to interactions conducted more or less exclusively in one language, of which one or more participants are nonnative speakers. Yet, nonnative discourse broadly considered must also include multilingual interactions involving various configurations of speakers with competencies in one or more of the languages being used. If we are to

take up nonnative discourse and or some similar label for framing an area of inquiry, the terminology must be considered critically.

In spite of the limitations of the concept of nonnative discourse, an interest in the ways nonnative speakers and their co-participants interact remains a valuable focus of increasing interest from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. A better understanding of nonnative discourse as social action in the world may shed light on a wide range of issues, including the ways that cultural identities are constituted through discourse, the ways second language learners are socialized into speech communities, the special adaptations of turn taking and sequence organization that occur, the ways intersubjective understandings are achieved and repaired, and the ways linguistic and pragmatic competence become salient within interactions. Workplace ethnography and conversation analytic research on discourse in institutional settings may shed light on the ways nonnative speakers navigate the discourse contexts and institutional constraints of workplace tasks, medical encounters, small group work in language classrooms, and a variety of other settings. A diverse body of research that focuses on speakers of various proficiency levels, mother tongue languages, and second/other languages of interaction may ultimately be of great interest to those concerned with second language learning, use, and education.

IN THIS ISSUE

As stated above, this issue focuses on conversation analysis (CA) as a methodology for studying nonnative discourse. The three articles present original research on nonnative speaker interaction, and the interview with Emanuel Schegloff addresses potential problems and prospects for the application of CA to the study of nonnative discourse. There is a small, but growing body of conversation analytic research on nonnative discourse, including work on NNS-NNS discourse, or *lingua franca* talk (Jordon & Fuller, 1975; Firth, 1996; Wagner & Firth, 1997); repair in NS-NNS talk (Gaskill, 1980; Kurhila, in press; Schwartz, 1980; Wong, 2000a), problems of transcription of nonnative discourse (Jefferson, 1996); language proficiency interviews (Egbert, 1998; He, 1998), ESL writing conference interaction (Koshik, 1999), and on distinctive speaking practices found in NNS talk (Wong, 2000b, in press). Firth (1996) has also raised theoretical and methodological questions about the applicability of CA to nonnative discourse.

The contributions to this special issue on nonnative discourse add new findings to the existing literature and address questions about using CA as a tool for analyzing nonnative discourse. The interview with Professor Schegloff addresses these questions explicitly, while some of the same issues are also addressed in the articles through their hands-on analytic work on the data of different kinds of nonnative speaker interactions.

Concerning the study of nonnative speaker interaction, Schegloff suggests it is best not to work from the assumption that its practices and organization are

fundamentally different than those of interaction among native speakers; instead, he sets it as an empirical question whether, when, and how it becomes relevant in an interaction that a participant is a nonnative speaker. While there may be some differences in the discursive practices of nonnative speakers, Schegloff argues that the concept of *recipient design* is just as useful in this domain as it has been for understanding other kinds of talk. Recipient design, he explains, concerns not only the ways that speakers design utterances for particular hearers, but also the ways hearers interpret the talk of particular speakers. With regard to uncertainties about analyzing the talk of speakers from other linguistic and cultural backgrounds, Schegloff argues that the organization of talk-in-interaction is fairly robust across cultures and languages, allowing CA researchers at least some access to nonnative speaker data. Uncertainties about individual instances, he suggests, can be addressed by working with collections of particular interactional phenomena.

With regard to what aspects of nonnative discourse seem promising to study from a CA perspective, Schegloff cautions against limiting the scope of inquiry in advance. He advises instead that the focus of such research should emerge from observations made in working closely with the data of recorded interactions, a point very much in harmony with Sacks' (1992) argument for the value of working with recordings of actual talk: practices can be observed that might not otherwise have even been imagined (p. 420). Such an approach to nonnative discourse, making new observations and identifying yet-to-be-described practices of talk-in-interaction, Schegloff suggests, may contribute not only to our understanding of nonnative discourse, but also to the evolving body of conversation analytic work on talk-in-interaction more generally.

The authors in this issue all discuss collections of phenomena found in their data and ground their claims in patterns found in collected cases. The articles reflect two approaches to nonnative discourse. Kidwell approaches nonnative discourse from a micro-sociological interest in talk in institutional settings. Her article examines interactions at the front desk of an English language institute, a setting where nonnative English speaking students regularly interact with native English speaker staff. Analysis focuses on the sequential organization of front desk encounters, revealing ways the participant's shared orientations to the organization and goals of these encounters facilitate NS-NNS interaction. In contrast to research that has focused on communication problems resulting from a lack of shared knowledge or limitations in linguistic competence, Kidwell examines ways that the common ground of shared expectations about front desk encounters fosters the successful transaction of school-related business in such encounters.

In contrast to views positing a one-to-one correlation between linguistic form and pragmatic function, Kidwell's analysis reveals how a wide variety of turn types are understood, within the context of front desk encounter openings, as requests for service. Moreover, she demonstrates that, in the context of front desk encounters, the action of a student walking to the counter is—without any talk whatsoever—understood by receptionists as a pre-request, request for attention

prior to making a request for service. This article reveals some specific ways that the organization of talk in an institutional setting can facilitate a limited proficiency NNS's success in talk and interaction.

Hosoda's study looks at conversational interactions in Japanese, including NS-NNS conversations as well NS-NS conversations. By focusing on other-repair, she takes a conversation analytic approach to phenomena in nonnative discourse that have already been studied in native speaker discourse in English and other languages, including Japanese. The issue here is the initiation of other-repair, or the ways in which nonnative speakers of Japanese help to occasion repair of their own talk by native speaker interlocutors. Consistent with the preference for self-initiation of repair documented in native speaker interactions, Hosoda finds that native Japanese speakers generally provide other-repair for their nonnative speaking peers only in response to practices which seem to invite repair.

Hosoda identifies a range of speaking practices (such as sound stretches and rising intonation) as well as embodied resources (such as gaze direction and body orientation) that are understood by recipients as inviting, or initiating, other-repair. Her analysis also focuses on practices for accepting other-repair, and suggests that problems of understanding may be involved when such acceptance behavior is missing. This study, by looking at other-repair in interactions involving nonnative speakers of Japanese, provides insights into the overall robustness of conversational structures as well as indications of some interesting variation.

While the first two articles look at NS-NNS talk in English and Japanese, Carroll examines NNS-NNS interaction in English among (native Japanese speaking) "novice-level" speakers, with an interest in their ability to manage the kinds of precision timing (Jefferson, 1973) found in the turn-taking practices of native speakers. The focus here is on the interactional competence of low-level nonnative speakers in an ability that is fundamental to the conduct of spoken interaction: the ability to start up a next turn at the projectable completion of another speakers' turn. Adult native speakers easily manage this kind of precision timing in their first language, but what about novice-level second language speakers? Carroll's analysis addresses this question by examining cases of next turn start-ups as well as speakers' attempts to resolve overlapping talk.

Carroll finds that novice-level speakers are capable of precisely timing next turn start ups some of the time, though inter-turn gaps are more common in this data than found in (NS) ordinary conversation. Since the data includes mainly short, simple turns constructions, Carroll leaves open the question of how these speakers would do at projecting the completion of more syntactically complex turns. In addition to examining how often novice speakers achieve precision timing, Carroll's analysis also considers cases of delayed next turn start ups that may in fact be responsive their interactional environment. Rather than resulting from a lack of competence, Carroll suggests that some inter-turn gaps are responsive to disfluencies in the prior turn that make it difficult to project the turn completion. Other delayed starts are argued to be similar to native speaker treatment of insuffi-

cient answers to questions. This kind of analysis is an example of the way a careful consideration of talk in its sequential context can avoid over-simplifying all instances of a phenomenon like inter-turn gaps as evidence of a lack of competence.

We hope that this issue of *ial* may help to further our understanding of the nature of nonnative discourse and also exemplify some powerful tools for its investigation. The articles represent conversational and institutional talk, NS-NNS and NNS-NNS interaction, talk among nonnative speakers of Japanese and English, and second as well as foreign language contexts. However, there is much more to accomplish if we are to understand nonnative discourse on its own terms, according to the social actions carried out and the orientations of the participants. There is a greater range of methodological diversity envisioned in the theme of nonnative discourse than is represented in this issue, including linguistic anthropology and the ethnography of speaking. There are also many discourse contexts not represented in these pages, including: pedagogical contexts, such as small group and tutorial interactions; and institutional and workplace contexts, such as medical encounters, and office and factory interactions. The forthcoming volume being edited by Rod Gardner and Johannes Wagner (in preparation) on international communication reflects a growing interest in this area of study and promises to make a valuable contribution. Nonnative discourse is a diverse domain of interaction in the world, and much remains to be learned. It is hoped that this issue, with its conversation analytic perspective, will contribute to a growing and diverse body of research on a wide range of nonnative speaker interaction.

NOTES

¹ When the call for papers went out, the aim was to invite researchers working from a variety of theoretical perspectives on spoken interaction, with the limitation that analysis should focus on details of recorded and transcribed discourse. While conversation analysis was intended to be an important part of the mix, the range of manuscripts submitted and the review process has resulted in an issue of conversation analytic research.

² Such a view is consistent with Poole's observation (Olsher, 1996) that with the growing population of limited English proficiency students in California public schools, the monolingual native speaker classroom is increasingly rare. The linguistic complexity of the situation including learners who have immigrated at various stages of school, those who have been raised in the US in an immigrant community, and those who are raised in multilingual households, makes it increasingly difficult to apply a bipolar native versus nonnative speaker distinction.

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