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Citation	言語文化共同研究プロジェクト. 2022, 2021, p. 31-39
Version Type	VoR
URL	https://doi.org/10.18910/88381
rights	
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The role of affection in language classroom discourse to assist younger learners' participation

Haruka Kikuchi

1. Introduction

Children's playful nature and their strong interests in their surroundings help them uniquely learn things around them, and second language learning is no exception (Bland, 2015). Younger learners, who have not yet developed language learning strategies like adult learners can do, heavily rely on their implicit mechanism to learn the language such as through rhymes, picture books, playful activities, most notably through interaction in CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) and immersion classrooms (Bland, 2015). This implicit language learning makes the classroom instruction more meaning-based rather than grammar-based (Bland, 2015), strongly embodying the notion of classroom interaction as both a vehicle and object of learning (Seedhouse, 2004).

In such everyday classroom interaction, it probably goes without saying that younger learners appreciate fun and enjoyable moments (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000; Tomlinson, 2015). It is suggested that emotions learners experience in the course of learning, such as the sense of happiness, surprise, and sympathy along with others play a critical role in their language acquisition (Tomlinson, 2015). In this sense, classroom interaction, no matter it is between the teacher and learners or among learners, can benefit from their affective engagement.

Up till the present, it has been the pedagogical aspect in the formal language classroom discourse which has gained researchers' attention, and there still lies room to uncover when it comes to the teacher's and learners' affective engagement in less formal and casual interaction (Waring, 2012). For younger learners who learn the target language by being involved in interactions, it is considered that participation in the discourse is a prerequisite before they achieve learning (for participation as learning, see, Walsh, 2013).

This paper aims at revealing the interactional work of emotion observed in the interaction between younger learners and a teacher, focusing on the accomplishment of discourse participation by employing Conversation Analysis (CA). It is hoped that this study will contribute to the design of a fun and enjoyable classroom discourse for younger learners.

2. Literature review

2.1. Less official classroom interaction and identities

Language classroom discourse has long been investigated within the framework of *IRF* (teacher Initiation, learner Response, and teacher Feedback, Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975) as it is considered typical and ubiquitous teacher-fronted discourse (Seedhouse, 2004). Although this three-part sequence has gained much attention, it is also unquestionable that the *IRF* is not the solo discourse type observed in language classrooms (Waring, 2012). In fact, the off-task talks have received less attention from the researchers.

Some research has pointed out how interlocutors of classroom discourse occasionally engage in less legitimate talks by orienting themselves to shifting identities based on the dynamic and fluid flow of the conversations, away from their *situated identity* as a teacher and learner (Zimmerman, 1998). This shift in their identity is suggested to contribute to the design of more communicative interaction (Richards, 2006).

Zimmerman (1998) identified three categorizations of interlocutors' fluid identity, namely, *transportable identity*, *discourse identity*, and *situated identity*. Transportable identity refers to the visible, physical, and cultural identity of an interlocutor, such as male/female, nationality, or one defined by their hobbies such as an art lover, whereas discourse identity indicates their status which shifts in accordance with the organization of the ongoing interaction, such as a speaker, listener, and a questioner. Situated identity, lastly, derives from the relative situation and activities of the moment, therefore in a classroom context, a teacher and a learner.

Employing this framework, research has investigated *off-the-record* (Richards, 2006, p.57) and *less legitimate* (Waring, 2012, p.191) teacher-learner interaction. Richards (2006) showed that learners who invoked their transportable identity relevant to their hobbies or their nationality deviated from the traditional classroom discourse style in order to illustrate a particular matter that they have more knowledge about than the teacher. The teacher, simultaneously, oriented himself to the transportable identity attributable to his nationality to display his contradicting standpoint from the learners (Richards, 2006). The contribution of interlocutors' shifting identity is also analyzed in terms of playful interaction in classroom discourse. Waring (2012) displayed that interlocutors successfully negotiated identities and released their institutional identity when engaging in *language play*, meaning, talks that involve humor. It was demonstrated, for example, that a learner overtly imitated the teacher to offer an evaluation to another learner, which mobilized laughter from the class. Thus, dynamic identities of the interlocutors create the flow of interaction which is not necessarily categorized under the framework of IRF, consequently exposing them to multiple types of conversations.

2.2. Emotion in classroom discourse

Teachers and learners are also observed to engage in various types of interaction by utilizing their emotions, and it has been discussed that their affective stances expressed in the flow of conversation are observed to impact discourse participation and engagement in learning activities.

Generally, in CA, the terms *emotion* and *affection* are not distinguished but used interchangeably (Ruusuvuori, 2013; Tainio and Laine, 2015). Instead of relying on any hidden, inner state of mind, emotion in the CA study is analyzed as something that is made publicly available to the other interlocutors in sequential positions of talk-in-interaction and is context sensitively adjusted (Couper-Kuhlen, 2009). Thus, the term *affective stance* is often employed in CA, defined as the observable practices the participants orient to in order to display their affection and emotion (Tainio and Laine, 2015). It is an attitude that becomes available for analysis through verbal and non-verbal cues (Tainio and Laine, 2015).

In a Swedish primary school, negative affective stances of a young novice immigrant learner and a teacher's attempt to have her engage in learning were analyzed by Cekaite (2012). In response to the learner's unwilling stance toward learning, the teacher employed overtly positive assessments and an explanation of the appropriate behavior. Additionally, Cekaite (2009) also investigated how a young novice L2 learner of Swedish successfully receives the teacher's attention when she needs help. It was by utilizing and upgrading her affective stance represented by her body postures and prosody that summons were effectively designed (Cekaite, 2009). Apart from language classrooms, Tainio and Laine (2015) examined affective stances displayed by teachers and pupils following the pupils' incorrect answers in Finnish mathematics classrooms. It is suggested that the teachers' affective stance which treats mistakes as natural and appropriate parts of the

classroom discourse can help learners create a positive attitude and self-confidence towards learning, as well as foster their participation.

It has been revealed that teachers' and learners' shifting identities and emotions in classrooms function to add both pedagogical and communicative functions to the classroom discourse. Besides younger learners' formal classroom participation studied by Cekaite (2009, 2012) and Tainio and Laine (2015) mentioned above, what needs to be further investigated is the accomplishment of discourse participation by much more novice and younger learners, and the work of emotion by the participants of classroom discourse.

3. Research objective and question

This research aims at identifying ways in which younger learners accomplish language classroom participation in relation with their own, and the teacher's use of affective stances.

Therefore, the research question is set as follows;

(1) How are the teacher's and learners' affective stances contributing to accomplishing younger learners' discourse participation?

Implications will be made in regard to ways to utilize affective stances to create opportunities to participate in the discourse for younger learners.

4. Data collection

The data recording was conducted in an afterschool located in Japan, where children aged 3-12 engage in communicative interaction in English with teachers and their classmates through various activities and language tasks. All the students and the teachers are expected to speak English as long as they stay inside the classroom, although they all share the same first language (L1), Japanese, except for one teacher from Australia whose L1 is English.

Classroom interaction was videotaped and transcribed for the research according to the CA's standard (Jefferson, 2004), and multimodal transcription systems (Mondada, 2018).

The teacher who participated in the present study is referred to as Ethan (Pseudonym). He is a mid-thirties Australian teacher who has taught at the present school for about one and a half years at the time of the recording. He has completed a month new teacher training program offered by the present school, especially focusing on classroom management for young learners. The new teachers received on-the-job training under the supervision of a teacher trainer and were taught teaching methods of specific classes based on the curriculum, such as phonics, book reading, worksheet, vocabulary, circle time, and other activities as well as material based off-the-job training basics of childhood education and child development. Information of the learner participants is provided at the beginning of the extract.

5. Methodology

5.1. Conversation Analysis

The present study employs Conversation Analysis (CA) for the analysis. CA attempts to investigate the ways in which interaction is processed based on social norms (Sacks, 1972) and analyze how one social action influences the next social action in talk-in-interaction (Hauser, 2015, Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1988). What

distinguishes CA from the other discourse analysis methodologies is that it utilizes the interlocutors' perspectives for analysis without applying exogenous theories (Okada, 2010; Seedhouse, 2004).

This study particularly employs institutional CA (Heritage & Clayman, 2011) in order to focus on how production and interpretation of social action are organized in a specific context of a classroom, and how interaction is formed by interlocutors who have the contextual identity as a teacher or a learner.

6. Analysis

6.1. Extract 1

Below shows two extracts of the interaction between Teacher Ethan and three preschool girls. The learners are sitting in line on one side of the classroom with a fan in their hands. The floor is filled with balloons, and the teacher is inflating some more balloons for an activity he is about to start, which is, blowing the balloons to the other side of the classroom as fast as possible with their fans.

Figure 1
image of extract 1

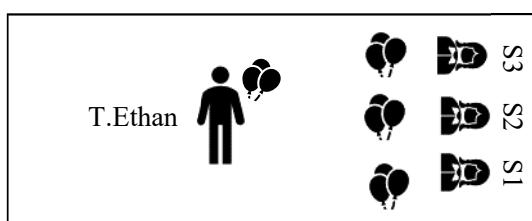


Table 1
Learner participants in extract 1

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Learning experience at the present school
S1	Four	Female	Three months
S2	Three	Female	Three months
S3	Three	Female	One month

The first extract demonstrates how the teacher's affective stances can elicit a self-selected turn and encourage the active participation of the learners. In this segment, the teacher's sequential actions with affective stance (shaking his head and body, followed with the breathing sounds) are effectively utilized to elicit affiliation from the learners, which is consequently leading a learner to participate in the discourse with initiatives.

Extract 1.1. : Okay? (Recorded on July 3rd, 2021. 16:20-16:21, 33 seconds)
(T=teacher, S1, S2)

25 T : *(1.1) [#(1.0) #(1.1) *
 t : *inflating a balloon, head shaking hard*
 fig: #2 #3



fig.2

fig.3

26 S1: [HHHHHHH
 27 S2: [HHHHHHH=
 28 S2: =HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
 29 T: *(4.5) *
 t: *places inflator on the shelf*
 30 T: ah: (0.4) ah ah ((making noisy breathing sound))
 t: drops his head at each outbreathing
 31 *(0.8) -->
 t: *ties up the balloon-->
 32 S1: £o::kay? £*
 t: -->*
 33 S2: [o::ka:::y
 34 T: *[I'm o:kay *
 t: *places the balloon in front of the learners*

The teacher inflates the balloon with a distinct posture of shaking his head in line 25, to which S1 and S2 align with laughter (lines 26-27). After placing the inflator on the shelf (line 29), he produces some noisy breathing sounds dropping his head at each outbreathing (line 30). S1 asks the teacher while laughing, “okay?” (line 32), which is subsequently repeated by S2 without the questioning prosody. Simultaneously the teacher’s answer to S1’s questions, “I’m okay” follows (line 34).

The rather exaggerated manner by the teacher in line 25 is serving two important affective functions for the construction of the following sequences. First, the emphasized head-shaking action is oriented by the learners as *doing being funny* as the learners’ affiliation shows (lines 26-27). Simultaneously, this action (line 25) along with his wheezing (line 30) is made relatable to another affective stance of his, tired. These double affective stances of the teacher, fun and tired, therefore are expressed through this sequence of inflating the balloon.

Interestingly, careful observation of the S1 in these lines reveals that she is able to utilize these two affective stances, being funny and being tired, to take a turn actively. While S1’s question (“£o::kay? £”, line 32) clearly demonstrates her affiliation to the teacher’s wheezing, therefore demonstrating her affective status as a worried student, she also includes laughter in the question by affiliating to the teacher’s affective stance, being funny. By orienting to the teacher’s state that inflating the balloon tires him and thus it concerns her, and also it is not too serious and something *laughable* (Glenn & Holt, 2013), she successfully creates an interactional space, or *space for learning* (Walsh, 2013) on her own. From the teacher’s perspective, his affective stances offer one very beginning learner with non-verbal resources that she can hang on to in order to actively participate in the discourse.

Although the learners' laughter was already elicited in this extract, the subsequent sequence observes how the teacher's conduct is upgraded in order to elicit greater affiliation and participation.

Extract 1.2. : Shared laughter (Recorded on July 3rd, 2021. 16:21, 22 seconds)

(T=teacher, S1, S2, S3)

```

35 T: *ONE more one more one more *  

  t: *index finger up, gets a balloon from the shelf-->*  

36   (.) *  

  t: -->*  

37 S1: o::ne ↑ONE MORE:::  

  (.)  

38 T: hh hh hh hh ((rough outbreathing))  

  t: attaching the balloon to the inflator  

40   (0.1)  

41 S2: hhhh  

42 T: hh (1.1) [#(2.9)  

  t: inflating the balloon, head shaking hard  

  fig: #4

```



fig.4

```

43 S1: [HHHHH  

44 S2: [HHHHH  

45 S3: [↑YAAAAAA ((screaming))  

46 T: *(0.7)* (0.4) *(0.2)*  

  t: *.....*places the inflator on the shelf*,*,*  

47   *(0.9)  

  t: *ties up the balloon-->  

48 T: ah: (outbreathing)  

  t: -->  

49   (1.5) *  

  t: -->*  

50 T: *↑AHHHHH↓ *haha=*  

  t: *bending over with his shoulders forward*,*,*  

51 S1: =hh (are you) [o:okay?  

52 T: * [so  

  t: *places the balloon in front of the learners-->  

53   (.)  

  t: -->  

54 T: yes*  

  t: -->*  

55 S2: (yes) oka::y  

56 T: we're gonna play a ga↑me

```

In line 39, interestingly, the teacher produces his distinct outbreathing sounds before inflating it with a head-shaking posture, while attaching the balloon to the inflator. S2 already affiliates. Line 42 observes the teacher's inflating action with the shaking head, but this time in a much greater manner compared with the first extract (figure 4). The learners start to produce their laughter after about a second, also in a louder volume (lines 43-45). The teacher subsequently displays his tiredness this time by bending his body forward (line 50), to which S1 asks "(are you) okay?" The teacher attempts to explain the game he is going to start

simultaneously with S1's question. S1 receives the answer in the following turn (line 54), while S2 repeats S1's question without the questioning prosody again.

In this extract, it is observable how the teacher's upgraded design of his posture is utilized as a means of inviting shared laughter of the learners. Firstly, the teacher produces his outbreathing sounds (line 39) before he initiates the balloon inflating turn, which projects the heading shaking manner of the teacher in the first extract. Following this, S2 initiates her affiliation with this preceding outbreathing and produces laughter, although she has not seen the teacher do being funny yet this time.

Subsequently, the teacher inflates the balloon in a greater posture by shaking his head and upper body. This invites shared laughter even by S3, who is not involved in the laughter before. By being oriented as funny in the first extract, his posture is demonstrably upgraded. This indicates that the teacher's display of affective stance is clearly designed as a means of eliciting affiliation. As a result, his upgraded affective stance accomplishes three very beginning learners' participation, including S3 who is left behind when the affective stance is not upgraded. S1's another self-selection is also witnessed in line 51, again orienting both of the teachers' tired and funny affective stances.

7. Discussions and conclusions

In this study, the affective stances and discourse participation of young learners were analyzed. Not only did the teacher use them as a means of attracting the learners' attention, the two extracts witnessed how they were oriented and recognized as an interactional resource also from the learners' side.

The present study set the research question as follows;

- (1) How are the teacher's and learners' affective stances contributing to accomplishing younger learners' discourse participation?

To answer this question, in extract 1.1. and 1.2., the teacher's overt affective stance of doing being funny successfully elicited participation as the laughter of two young learners by being affiliated. Additionally, in the second extract, the most novice learner's participation was mobilized when the affective stance was upgraded. The teacher's double affective stances, being funny and tired, were also utilized as a resource to initiate a self-selected turn by a very beginning learner.

Although it is impossible to directly observe the teacher's will, it can be indicated that the teacher chose to upgrade his posture and utilize it as a means of eliciting more laughter from the learners because he confirmed that his head-shaking and overt breathing can mobilize laughter in the first extract. Considering this immediate choice-making, it is suggested that the teacher showed his ability to immediately adjust his affective stance for the learners' more enjoyable moments.

Because affective stance is considered a necessary part of interactional competence (Cekaite, 2009), creating a discourse in which learners can express multiple affections can be an important work that language teachers can realize. Furthermore, it is implicated that teachers' ability to use and adjust affective stances in the discourse may embody their *Classroom Interactional Competence* (CIC, Walsh, 2013), as shown in this study that affective stances can provide interactional space for learners. In this regard, learners are also encouraged to develop and use their own CIC by expressing multiple emotions.

Further research is expected regarding more diverse types of affective stances in various types of classroom interactions, such as handling negative feelings of learners or assisting learners' participation through picture book reading.

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Appendix

Consent form for data recording

CONSENT FORM

大阪大学言語文化研究科博士前期課程
氏名 菊池春花
研究参加同意書
2020年10月

本状は教室内の教師の質問と学習者の回答についての研究へのご協力をお願いするものです。本研究は教室内コミュニケーションの活性化を目的としています。その一環として、皆さんが参加されているクラスをビデオカメラで撮影し、研究資料として使用させていただきたくと考えています。
以下、同意いただける項目にチェックを入れていただき、ご署名いただきますようお願いいたします。

• 協力は任意です。
• 研究に関する質問はいつでもお受けします。
• 研究に関するすべての論文・発表において、本人を特定する情報が公表されることはありません。

利用範囲項目(同意していただける項目にチェックを入れてください)
 データを研究に使用することを認めます。
 ビデオデータを研究発論文として刊行・学会報告等に使用することを認めます。
 文字化・イラスト化したものであれば、データを研究発論文として刊行・学会報告等に使用することを認めます。
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 文字化・イラスト化したものであれば、データを教育のために授業で使用することを認めます。

御署名 _____ 年 _____ 月 _____ 日

氏名 菊池春花
The author's contact address,
email address, ↓
and phonenumerhere+
[Redacted box]

Transcript notation

* * Interlocutors' embodied movements continue between the two identical symbols. (one symbol per participant's line of action)

*---> The action continues
---> * until another symbol appears.

... Preparation
,,,. Retraction.
>> The action starts before the extract.
-->> The action continues over the extract.

(Mondada, 2018)