

Simone Groeber & Virginie Fasel Lauzon, University of Neuchâtel

Who's the Learner? Negotiation of Expertise and Participation in the Second Language Classroom

A basic description of second language classrooms is that they supposedly involve a 'language expert' (the teacher) and at least one language learner, whose roles are asymmetric and complementary. Social interactions being anchored in the local context and unfolding step-by-step, these roles (or 'membership categories') are subject to constant negotiation. For example, expertise may be re-distributed between participants during a thematic discussion.

What about language expertise? An interesting situation to investigate is when the teacher's L1 is the students' L2 (or 'target-language') and the students' L1 is the teacher's L2. Such a design may give rise to intense negotiation of language expertise, for example when it comes to translate chunks in one or the other language. This negotiation may be accomplished on a collaborative mode, where participants articulate their distributed expertise to jointly construct meaning: the negotiation gives then rise to a collaborative dialogue and mutual language learning opportunities. Besides, it seems to increase the students' participation. On the other hand, when the teacher's (language) expertise is challenged, it sometimes happens that the students mock him/her and that it affects their participation in L2 in a negative way.

Negotiating expertise in the second language classroom is then closely interrelated to modes of participation, classroom 'atmosphere' and second language learning. Documenting the nature and functioning of these interrelations requires adopting a microanalytic perspective on classroom interaction that includes multimodal concerns.

In this paper, we investigate how learners negotiate expertise in the second language classroom. Our data consist of 20 hours of video-taped and finely transcribed French L2 classroom interactions involving learners at a lower-advanced level. Drawing from conversation analysis, we focus on the ways participants accomplish negotiation of language forms and thematic content. We are especially interested in the plurilingual linguistic and discursive resources used in these negotiation sequences, e.g. code-switch between French and Standard German or Swiss German, as well as gazes, gestures and body orientations. Our aims are to describe the dynamics of negotiation as well to document the potential (and limits) of such sequences for increased participation and learning.