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Epistemological Reorientations and L2 Interactional Settings: A Postscript to the Special Issue

GABRIELE KASPER[1] and JOHANNES WAGNER[2]
[1]*University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Department of Second Language Studies, 1890 East-West Road, Honolulu, HI 96822 Email: gkasper@hawaii.edu*
[2]*University of Southern Denmark, Department of Design and Communication, Universitetsparken 1, 6000 Kolding, Denmark Email: jwa@sdu.dk*

This postscript discusses the contributions of the four articles in this issue to the field and positions them in relation to other studies in recent CA research on L2. The articles focus on the two arenas for L2 learning: the classroom and the lifeworld of learners. These arenas are widely different from each other and equally so within with respect to organization and participation frameworks and the social practices deployed; but the interactional problems that participants confront inside and outside of the classroom partially overlap. Learning and teaching objects (or 'learnables') are brought into being by the participants through their joint actions, at particular moments in the ongoing activity, be it in a classroom or a situation in the lifeworld. The four articles re-specify standard SLA concepts in interactional terms: attention and noticing (Kunitz, 2018, this issue), corrective feedback (Majlesi, 2018, this issue), negotiation of/for meaning (Eskildsen, 2018, this issue), and corrections and metalinguistic explanations (Theodórsdóttir, 2018, this issue). Their re-specification adds value to these concepts because it furnishes them with a publicly visible interactional grounding and shows in each case how linguistic items become objects for reflexive linguistic practices by the participants.

Keywords: ethnomethodology; conversation analysis; L2 settings; SLA database

AS ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES MATURE THEY develop an increasing range of ontological and epistemological perspectives, theories, and research methodologies, some of these mutually compatible, others not. This is a normal state of affairs and second language acquisition (SLA) is no exception. At the same time, advancing new research perspectives while also maintaining the integrity of SLA as a field requires some form of active management by the community (Hulstijn, Young, & Ortega, 2014). In this effort, special issues of our leading journals play a key role. Over the decades *The Modern Language Journal* has been a forum for promoting empirically grounded debate of emerging and established approaches to second language learning and education. The current special issue builds on several predecessors that thematized socially grounded perspectives, specifically research that extends the sociological traditions of ethnomethodology (EM) and conversation analysis (CA) to SLA (*MLJ, 81* (3), 1997; *88* (4), 2004; *91*, Focus Issue, 2007).

In their Introduction, Eskildsen and Majlesi (2018, this issue) highlight two foundational principles of EMCA and their application to SLA. The first principle is to conceptualize any action, whether of language or other matters, as socially constituted; visible; and therefore observable by the participants, and consequential for them. Understanding learning as socially *constituted* critically differs from views that acknowledge a role for social factors in L2 learning (e.g., Tarone, 2007). EMCA does not support factor models of SLA or of the relationship of (inter)action, participants, and context more generally, but explores the ways social actions are built by the participants,

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contingent on and indexical for the specifics in any situation.

The second principle extends the concept of learning as a social activity into method. It requires that the analysis be consistently grounded in the participants' observable conduct and their displayed understandings (Schegloff, 1996). The 'emic' perspective entails close analytical attention to the details of the participants' conduct and their surroundings that they make relevant for each other, including their talk, embodied action, material objects, and spatial configurations.

A third EMCA foundational principle, implied in the other two but not expressly discussed by Eskildsen and Majlesi (2018, this issue), is the principle of reflexivity, "an unavoidable feature of the way actions are performed" (Lynch, 2000, p. 26; cf. Heritage, 1984). In the context of this special issue, reflexivity is essentially embedded in conceptualizing the focal topic, learning objects. Of course, *what* is learned is a shared research interest in SLA across approaches. But outside ethnomethodologically grounded SLA the *what*—linguistic material and how it is used, from phonology to pragmatics and discourse—is usually treated as pre-existing the learning context, separated from learning as process or practice and the learning subject, the learner. Learning objects in this sense are characterized in terms of their inherent structure, and that characterization varies depending on how language and its organization are theorized. From an EMCA perspective, learning objects (or 'learnables') are brought into being by the participants through their joint action, at particular moments in the ongoing activity (e.g., Zemel & Koschmann, 2014). It may be useful to note here that EMCA's distinctive treatment of objects is not limited to learning objects. EMCA conceptualizes objects of all sorts as *oriented objects*, or *objects in use* (Nevile et al., 2014; Rawls, 2008)—a position that may remind readers of Wittgenstein's (1953) argument that "the meaning of a word is its use in the language" (p. 43).

When a resource or a method of interaction becomes a learning object, the entire activity configuration changes—asymmetrical epistemic relations are made relevant, material objects are put in the service of learning, social actions operate on the object in ways that make it into a learning object, and the activity shifts focus from achieving intersubjectivity to doing learning. The contributions to this special issue demonstrate how learning objects are contingently constituted through the participants' interactional work in different settings.

THE ARTICLES IN THE SPECIAL ISSUE

The contributions focus on the two arenas for second language learning: the classroom and the lifeworlds of learners. These arenas are widely different from each other and equally so with respect to organization and participation frameworks and the social practices deployed; but the interactional problems that participants confront inside and outside of the classroom partially overlap. This becomes quite clear in the articles. The two articles on classroom analysis (Kunitz, 2018, this issue; Majlesi, 2018, this issue) show very detailed distributed and locally accomplished work of students and teachers with respect to formal aspects of the target language. Kunitz discusses student peer work and the constitution of L2 material as learning objects; Majlesi examines teacher-led plenary interaction and L2 material as teaching objects. Both authors give analytical attention to textual and material objects as key elements in the interaction. Their video-recorded data allow them to make detailed observations of how material objects in the classrooms—whiteboards and screens, textbooks and papers—support the work of students and teacher.

Theodórsdóttir (2018, this issue) and Eskildsen (2018, this issue) demonstrate how language students and locals cooperate when language resources do not suffice and problems of understanding need to be solved. Both articles demonstrate as well how participants organize the transformation from an ordinary interaction in the lifeworld to an occasion for language learning. Eskildsen draws on interactions between peers who know each other quite well. Theodórsdóttir's data cover a range of interactions with friends and strangers, including service encounters, task-oriented domestic activities, and casual conversation. The data for both studies were audio-recorded by the L2 speakers themselves. Although the "remote observation method" (Iino, 2006) has been used for video recordings, audio recordings are often seen as less intrusive and facilitate recording a wider range of encounters with less advance preparation. On the downside, audio recorded data are not equipped to integrate the use of material objects and embodied action into the analysis. In contrast, the two classroom articles showcase compellingly how video data allow for an integrative analysis of the vocal and nonvocal resources mobilized by the participants.

In their analyses of how learning objects in different settings contingently emerge, all four articles re-specify standard SLA concepts: attention and noticing (Kunitz), corrective feedback (Majlesi), negotiation of/for meaning (Eskildsen), and corrections and metalinguistic explanations (Theodórsdóttir). The studies augment the EMCA literature on these topics (Burch, 2014; Kääntä, 2014; Lee & Burch, 2017; Markee, 1994; Markee & Kunitz, 2013) and contribute to the larger project of revisiting SLA classics from a praxeological perspective. Re-specification adds value to these concepts because it furnishes them with a publicly visible interactional grounding and shows in each case how linguistic items become objects for reflexive linguistic practices by the participants.

Kunitz re-specifies 'attention' and 'noticing' and shows how students in solving classroom tasks generate and specify particular linguistic problems. The examples discussed came from a classroom task where students were to prepare an oral presentation. The students created a script, in other words they reorganized an oral task into a written task. This in itself might foreshadow a strong focus on form, on grammatical correctness in their task solutions as well as an attempt to preempt possible problems of formulation. When composing the text, the students used textual resources from the internet. While writing the script, they encountered several grammatical challenges. They focused on the minute details of morphology, specifically the gender of Italian nouns and their agreement with the components of the noun phrase. In so doing, the students defined linguistic challenges that were not set by the teacher but emerged from the ways they themselves solved the classroom tasks, which in turn displayed their understanding of the task demands. By going to great lengths to get the grammar right the students showed their commonsense understanding that linguistic correctness is normative for written texts. But they may also have oriented to the upcoming oral presentation as a prepared performance that requires more attention to formal correctness than unprepared talk. In either case, the sustained focus on form in their work on the script reflexively constitutes the students as 'good members' of their category. Kunitz shows how students make their awareness of a challenge visible to each other, how they produce and accept possible solutions, and how they move on in composing their text.

Majlesi shifts the analytical focus from the students to the teacher. His study joins an extensive research direction in EMCA that examines classrooms as dedicated sites for 'knowledge installation' (Macbeth, 2000) and specifically examines how teachers do their professional work as routine interactional achievement. The interactional practice of interest is 'corrective feedback,' a notion that is most commonly associated with the third position in the IRF sequence. As Majlesi notes, SLA research from various theoretical perspectives has sought to ascertain how beneficial corrective feedback is for L2 learning. While this question clearly demands answers for all practical purposes, EMCA classroom research puts it on the backburner in order to address its logical precedent first, which is how 'feedback' is occasioned, how and by whom it is given, what its consequences are for the evolving classroom interaction—and not least what other actions besides 'feedback' are done in third position (Lee, 2007). For instance, in the context of checking homework activities (a pedagogical environment similar to the one in Majlesi's study), Waring (2008) shows how teachers' 'explicit positive feedback' works not only as sequence-closing but actively inhibits further student talk and in this way sets up structural roadblocks to learning opportunities. Majlesi's study extends earlier CA research on 'negative' feedback (Seedhouse, 1997) and 'corrective feedback' (Hauser, 2005) more particularly. These studies demonstrated the gains from teasing undifferentiated pedagogical notions apart—thereby expanding the knowledge base of how teachers do their professional work and thus furnishing an observable empirical foundation for teacher education and development. Majlesi's contribution advances this work by expanding the phenomenon under analysis from talk to the full range of multisemiotic practices. For this project he builds on Goodwin's (1994) concept of 'professional vision,' showing how the teacher "provides a landscape of semiotic resources for the student to understand" (Majlesi, 2018, this issue, p. 18), turns "the grammatical exercise" into a "corrective feedback sequence," and expands it into "definition talk" (Kääntä, Kasper, & Piirainen–Marsh, 2016; (Majlesi, 2018, this issue, p. 15). Majlesi describes the visual and audible resources that teachers use in focusing on and explaining grammar in the classroom and documents the tight interplay of visual and verbal resources. Through the activity of 'landmarking,' students are instructed to see the focal problem in specific ways. Landmarking transforms the grammatical item into an 'object of knowing,' making it "publicly available for the language learner" (Majlesi, 2018, this issue, p. 13), by giving it a visual form that then can be handled through other actions (e.g., pointing, underlining, numbering, labeling, etc.). Majlesi's study explicates how knowledge of particular structures in Swedish grammar is 'installed' as the teachers' and students' coordinated accomplishment. It illustrates EMCA's stance of 'ethnomethodological indifference,' an analytical attitude that explicates social members' observable and accountable practices without criticizing or endorsing them. From a pedagogical perspective it can certainly be asked whether the isolation of linguistic elements from their ecological places in interaction or texts helps students use those elements in interactional or textual practices. But this is not Majlesi's project or, for that matter, that of the broader EMCA research on the social order of education delivery.

Through the procedures described by Majlesi, linguistic elements are isolated from their ecological place in an interactional practice and are made an object, reified, to be studied, treated, and eventually learned. This seems to be a 'large scale' institutional version of what Brouwer (2004) describes as the interactional practice in a word search by which side sequences with phonetic repairs are launched in L2 interaction: "the isolation of the repairable from the turn it occurs in" (pp. 104–105). While side sequences disturb the local progressivity of the interaction which is re-established after the side-sequence is closed, the institutional practices of grammar teaching are not related to interactional practices and their value for the further L2 career of the students still needs empirical evidence. Majlesi's hope that "the nonverbal methods used here can be recorded and retrieved as taught knowledge in the future" (2018, this issue, p. 26) needs corroboration by further research.

Majlesi shows in detail how the grammatical problem provided by the teacher is made visually available for the students. Although the students identify and correct the errors without difficulty, the teacher unfolds her version of the way this problem can be solved. From 'doing learning' as the collective work on a grammatical problem as in Kunitz (2018, this issue), we are now in 'doing teaching,' the teacher's way of creating objects of knowledge.

Eskildsen (2018, this issue) reconceptualizes the Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996, *inter alia*), specifically key concepts subsumed under the umbrella terms Negotiation for Meaning (NfM), in terms of repair practices (also Hauser, 2005; Mori, 2004; Wagner, 1996). On the basis of data drawn from the L2 speakers' lifeworld recordings, Eskildsen shows how participants' practices for handling trouble in the talk are different from what the NfM approach describes on the basis of first and foremost experimental and classroom data. Eskildsen's updated version of an Interaction Hypothesis builds on *usage-based linguistics* according to which "L2 learning is the conspiracy of all the utterances in any one person's entire biography as L2 user" (2018, this issue, p. 51). In the article, Eskildsen draws on longitudinal data from lifeworld interactions (Pekarek Doehler, Wagner, & González–Martínez, 2018). In line with a number of earlier studies he describes how participants engage in word searches (Brouwer, 2003; Goodwin & Goodwin, 1986; Koshik & Seo, 2012) and transform them into practices for learning where the searched-for items become the learning objects. Eskildsen shows how over time items are re-used by the participants with or without help from their co-participants and how these items eventually become unmarked and untroubled resources in the participants' talk. The interactional procedures by which these learnables are treated by the participants in the interaction are crucial for building vocabulary.

Theodórsdóttir (2018, this issue) investigates other-repair practices in lifeworld interactions when they expand into language teaching sequences. Repair is one of the core methods of interactional organization (Kitzinger, 2013), since it is the "self-righting mechanism for the organization of language use in social interaction" (Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977, p. 381) and takes care of trouble of understanding or producing talk. Theodórsdóttir shows that repairs can expand in quite lengthy interactions in which the trouble is handled (see also Egbert, Niebecker, & Rezzara, 2004). These sequences can do much more than just solve the trouble; they also draw on grammatical explanations and teaching practices known from classrooms. In other cases in Theodórsdóttir's data, other-corrections are afforded by sequential constraints. In one of her examples, a tour guide is asked 'what they are' which the guide immediately corrects to 'where they are.' This "repair *en passant*" (Kurhila, 2001, p. 1103) is not necessarily born out of the guide's concerns about linguistic correctness. The guide has been asked a question and to produce a relevant answer it has to be clear what the question actually is. So the correction needs to be done to answer the question. But at the same time the correction affords subsequences where linguistic features of the talk are explored and which leads beyond a repair of interactional trouble.

EXPANDING THE DATABASE

A strong stream of recent CA research on L2 learning in the wild has expanded the database of SLA. The articles by Eskildsen and Theodórsdóttir in this special issue further contribute to this effort. There is clearly a need to substantially broaden the corpus on interaction and learning in ordinary conversation and institutional settings outside of language education. But as the articles by Kunitz and Majlesi show, there is also a need to further document the social organization of activities arranged for language learning inside and outside of classrooms. Although there is a large literature on classroom research in teacher-led and peer-managed interaction from a range of theoretical perspectives (Markee, 2015), coarse-grained data representation and pre-existing coding categories (Hauser, 2005, for a critique) often obscure the view on how teachers and students accomplish their joint work of teaching and learning through their coordinated actions and sense-making practices. CA research on L2 classroom interaction, including several monographs (Hellermann, 2008; Markee, 2000; Seedhouse, 2004; Sert, 2015; Walsh, 2006; Waring, 2015), uncovers the interactional architectures of activities with different speech exchange systems, explicates how these interactional organizations reflexively afford and constrain teaching and learning as local achievements, and traces how students develop interactional competence in classrooms over time (Pekarek Doehler & Fasel Lauzon, 2015). CA's emic perspective offers a method to question the professional canon and make new discoveries on topics that classroom researchers and L2 educators believed to be well understood, such as unpacking the positions of the IRF sequence. For example, several studies reveal the local interactional and pedagogic work that teachers contingently do in third position, and that is made invisible through blanket terms such as 'feedback' (Lee, 2007, 2008; Waring, 2008).

A more recent expansion of the database on classroom interaction comes from a stream of studies on Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), an educational program in which the target language is used as a medium of instruction in courses on other subjects (history, physics, etc.). Although designed for education and learning, CLIL interaction shares with institutional interaction in the wild, and instructional settings specifically (e.g., Koole, 2010), that teachers and students pursue interactional goals outside of language learning, such as explaining a law of physics (Kääntä et al., 2016) and conducting a physical experiment (Kääntä & Piirainen–Marsh, 2013). Shifts to target language matters arise contingently as students encounter understanding problems while working on content materials (Jakonen & Morton, 2015).

CA classroom research has also advanced considerably the corpus of student-managed interaction. Here we highlight one direction of studies with transparently obvious pedagogical implications, namely studies on task-based language teaching. A dominant strand in the diverse TBLT program is based on the assumption that task design is causally related to interaction and learning (Robinson, 2011). Building on Breen's (1989) distinction of task-as-workplan and task-as-process, a series of CA studies (Hellermann & Pekarek Doehler, 2010; Mori, 2002; Ro, 2018; Seedhouse 2005, among others) uncovers how students transform task instructions into collaboratively and contingently accomplished activities and in the process generate opportunities for L2 learning that are not predictable from the task design.

Mention also has to be made of an extensive body of research on settings designated for language learning outside of classrooms. These types of "nonformal institutional interactions" (Hauser, 2008) comprise diverse activity types, including (writing) tutorials (Nguyen, 2012b; Seo & Koshik, 2010; Young & Miller, 2004; Waring, 2005), conversations-for-learning (Hauser, 2008; Kasper & Kim, 2015; Kim, 2017), an extensive reading book club (Ro, 2017, 2018), and augmented reality games (Hellermann, Thorne, & Fodor, 2017). They share interactional commonalities both with ordinary conversation and institutional talk in L2 speakers' lifeworld and with expressly pedagogical activities. For example, the pedagogical practice of "designedly incomplete utterances" was first observed by Koshik (2002) as an instructional practice in writing tutorials (see also Hazel & Mortensen, 2018). Conversely, knowledge checks are used among L1 speakers when an epistemic domain and its associated register is not (or less) available to a co-participant (Kitzinger & Mandelbaum, 2013). The same practice is employed in conversations-for-learning (Kim, 2012, 2017) to achieve intersubjectivity, and it also makes the epistemic object available as potential learning object.

As other generic interactional methods, practices for checking knowledge and understanding traverse settings and activities, but they occur more massively in some settings than others. Knowledge checks have a robust presence across many instructional contexts because they are co-constitutive of settings designated for knowledge installation (Macbeth, 2000), from dyadic teacher–student consultations in math classrooms (Koole, 2010) to teacher-fronted EFL classes (Sert, 2013) and peer activities in CLIL classes (Jakonen & Morton, 2015). But then again we see teacher-fronted plenary interaction in which the teacher hardly ever checks the students' knowledge or understanding; instead, it is incumbent upon the students to initiate clarification of problems regarding the subject matter (Kääntä & Kasper, forthcoming). The rough characterization of social domains by overall purpose and participation framework never obviates the need to specify analytically the *local* interaction order.

L2 speakers' lifeworlds afford and constrain opportunities for participation and L2 learning in many different ways (Wagner, 2015). The language-focused episodes in the wild documented in this issue by Eskildsen and Theodórsdóttir are similarly extensive as those reported in some previous studies (Brouwer, 2003; Kasper & Burch, 2016) but contrast with the short life of a lexical item as a learning object in other interactions with the same L2 speaker (Theodórsdóttir, 2011). The great majority of studies, Eskildsen (2018, this issue) included, report on lexical problems and their solution through various types of repair, from speakers' word searches and checks of the recipient's knowledge and understanding to recipients seeking confirmation of uncertain hearing or understanding. By contrast, in addition to word searches, Theodórsdóttir (2018, this issue) documents occasioned shifts to L2 grammar that generate extended teaching sequences and reflexively co-categorize the L1 and L2 speaker into teacher and student respectively. The L1 speaker's orientation in the 'grammar lessons' to her epistemic status as language expert contrasts with Kurhila's (2006) observations that in ordinary conversation and institutional talk between L1 and L2 speakers of Finnish, the L1 speakers "avoid adopting the role of linguistic expert" and rather "orient to the progress of interaction" (p. 220).

CONCLUSION

What are we to make of the distributional variation in the categories of L2 learning objects, the interactional methods that produce them, and the fore- and backgrounding of linguistic authority? They would be worrisome if a firm border were drawn between any form of activity arranged for language learning on the one hand and the wild on the other, and within-setting diversity were expected to be epiphenomenal. From an EMCA perspective, participants' methods for managing the activity at hand, and to whom and to what they allocate interactional space, exhibit their understanding of the activity there and then. These understandings are not subjectivist but display the participants' normative, commonsense orientations to the setting and what needs to or can normally get done in it. As Anna and friends are laying the table in a domestic setting and enjoying a car trip, and Peony and Keiko are chatting over tea and cake at a café (Kasper & Burch, 2016), their extended focus on L2 grammar and other matters of language form shows the participants' orientations to what these settings afford or tolerate. These orientations are quite different from those on display in various institutional settings, such as interactions between L1 Norwegian-speaking social workers and L2 Norwegian-speaking clients in social welfare offices in Norway (Svennevig, 2003), L1 Finnish-speaking secretaries and L2 Finnish-speaking clients in university offices in Finland (Kurhila, 2004, 2006), or L1 Japanese-speaking physicians and Ghanaian patients in medical consultations conducted in English and Japanese (Mori & Shima, 2014). In these goal-oriented encounters participants engage the entire repair apparatus to secure understanding, but without shifting the activity to learning. In sales transactions in a bar in Denmark and a bakery in Iceland, L2 speakers of Danish (Kasper & Wagner, 2011) and Icelandic (Theodórsdóttir, 2011) seek to confirm their understanding of a lexical item in the seller's turn with codeswitches to English, but only the bakery customer transforms the item into a learning object and herself into an L2 learner. In institutional settings outside language classrooms and other arrangements for language learning participants regularly prioritize the institutional agenda over language learning and teaching with some regularity—but not necessarily. In multilingual workplace interactions at construction sites in Norway, Svennevig (2017) describes how a migrant construction worker turns gaps in his work-related Norwegian vocabulary into opportunities for language learning. In all cases, reference to the objects in question is established with other semiotic resources in the surroundings, so that the word searches themselves produce the target item as a learning object. Furthermore, the participants expand the completed search sequences into learning and teaching activities not unlike those reported by Theodórsdóttir (2018, this issue) through rehearsing, pronunciation practice, and checking the written form of the L2 word. As

Svennevig (2017) notes, the study indicates that "at least in some workplaces, language learning is attended to as a relevant activity in and of itself alongside the accomplishment of everyday work tasks" (p. 9).

The take-away for future research on learning in the wild, as we see it, is to continue expanding the data corpus with a wider range of activities in L2 speakers' lifeworlds, broadening the range of multilingual speakers, and situating interactions more fully in their multisemiotic ecologies. For the last item, analysis from the participants' perspective requires that researchers' access to the interactionally relevant semiotic practices in the scene approximates that of the participants. Kunitz (2018, this issue) and Majlesi (2018, this issue) demonstrate the complex laminations of talk, gaze and body movement, production and manipulation of textual and material objects, and spatial configurations for action formation, producing and transforming participation frameworks, constituting learning and teaching objects, and advancing the task and instructional agenda. Analyses of multilingual interaction, learning and development in the wild based on video-recorded data (Burch & Kasper, 2016; Greer, 2016; Kurhila, 2006; Lamb, 2016; Nguyen, 2012a; Siegel, 2015) indicate how upgrading the quality of the data corpus might advance the knowledge base of SLA.

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