Lang. Teach. (2010), **43:2**, 202–215 © Cambridge University Press 2009
doi:10.1017/S0261444809005722 First published online 24 March 2009

Interaction as method and result of language learning

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The premise of this paper is that the interactional practices constituting teacher–student interaction and language learning are interdependent in that the substance of learners' language knowledge is inextricably tied to their extended involvement in the regularly occurring interactional practices constituting their specific contexts of learning. After laying out the central components of a theoretical framework for understanding the interdependent nature of interaction and learning, I provide an overview of the Initiation–Respond–Feedback organization (IRF), a ubiquitous classroom interactional practice, and then examine two instances of the IRF taken from two language classrooms. I pay particular attention to actions in the IRF that give shape to learners' developing understandings of, and skills for, using the target language. After briefly discussing the likely consequences of extended participation in the IRF in terms of L2 outcomes, I suggest directions for future research.

1. Introduction

The title of the paper is a paraphrase of a quote by Lev Vygotsky, the Russian psychologist, which articulates a key principle of his theory of development. The quote is: 'The search for method becomes one of the most important problems of the entire enterprise of understanding the uniquely human forms of psychological activity. In this case, the method is simultaneously prerequisite and product, the tool and the result of the study' (Vygotsky 1978: 65). This is the same claim about the interdependent nature of language teaching and learning that I will address here. Restated the point is this: the substance of learners' language knowledge is linked to, indeed arises from, learners' extended involvement in the regularly occurring interactional practices constituting their specific contexts of learning.

This view on the interdependent nature of language teaching, as instantiated in classroom interactional practices, and learning is an extension of current scholarly discussions in the field of SLA that have motivated reconceptualizations of the key concepts of language and learning.[1] These discussions have drawn heavily on theoretical insights and empirical findings from areas of study historically considered outside mainstream SLA, and include cultural

Revised version of a lecture presented on 30th September 2008 at the Language Institute of the University of Wisconsin–Madison and sponsored by their Doctoral Program in SLA.
[1] See e.g., Hall 1997, 2004a; Markee & Kasper 2004; Hall, Cheng & Carlson 2006; Block 2007.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444809005722 Published online by Cambridge University Press

psychology,[2] cognitive and interactional linguistics,[3] and sociology.[4] To date, the discussions have made great strides in moving the field away from a heavily mentalist view of language and learning as independent phenomena, and toward one that makes apparent their mutually constitutive relationship. However, while these discussions have been largely successful in helping the field to reconceptualize language and learning, so far they have had little to say about the equally important concept of teaching. That is, while the interdependent relationship between language and learning has been acknowledged, language teaching, as instantiated in teacher–student interactional practices, is still treated as an independent phenomenon that may or may not travel over to learning (Freeman 2007; Long 2007). My plan here is to redress this theoretical lacuna.

2. Theoretical framework

I begin by laying out the basic components of a theoretical framework for understanding the interdependent nature of interaction and learning that draws on two sources. The first is conversation analysis (CA). It began in the field of sociology over thirty years ago as an offshoot of ethnomethodology, an approach to the study of social life that considers the nature and source of social order to be fundamentally empirical, locally accomplished, and thus grounded in real-world activity (Garfinkel 1967; Heritage 1984a). Emerging from ethnomethodology's interests in the empirical study of social order, but asserting a fundamental role for interaction as 'the primordial site of human sociality' (Schegloff 2006: 70), CA narrowed its focus to the study of talk-in-interaction. It grounded its analytic approach on three premises concerning how individuals orient to talk-in-interaction.

First, it is assumed that what is produced in a current turn at talk, both in meaning and form, is oriented to the immediately preceding turn. Second, at the same time that the current turn looks back to the prior turn, it projects a next action or range of possible actions to be accomplished in the subsequent turn at talk. Third, in producing the next action, an individual displays her understanding of the prior turn, and in so doing creates, maintains or restores a 'sequential architecture of intersubjectivity' (Heritage 2004: 105), that is, a shared understanding of the work participants are doing together.

Beginning with these premises, the first generation of CA scholars gave its analytic attention to describing the structural character of the methods used by social group members to bring about and maintain social order in talk-in-interaction. Findings from this empirical work have revealed three tools to be fundamental to the achievement of social order in interaction. The first is turn-taking, which involves the construction and coordination of turns among participants. Second is sequence organization, which is concerned with how consecutive turns are formed to be coherent with prior turns and at the same time, implicative of next relevant turns. The third method is repair, which is the 'self-righting' mechanism' (Schegloff,

[2] See Vygotsky 1962, 1978.
[3] See e.g., Levinson 1992, 2006a, b; Hopper 1998; Bybee & Hopper 2001; Bybee 2003, 2006; Tomasello 2003, 2006.
[4] Sacks 1972; Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974; Schegloff 2006, 2007.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444809005722 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Jefferson & Sacsk 1977: 381) by which troubles in maintaining intersubjectivity are dealt with such that the turn, the action sequence and the activity can move to possible completion.

Researchers with interests in talk in institutional settings have used the analytic methods developed in earlier CA studies as well as the findings on the structural nature of the conversational methods to explore how they and other methods are used to bring about and maintain social order in institutional talk-in-interaction. Interactional contexts of interest have included, for example, health care encounters (e.g., Heritage & Maynard 2006), court proceedings (e.g., Galatolo & Drew 2006), and – important to the discussion here – classroom interaction (e.g., Mehan 1979; Heap 1992; Macbeth 1994, 2000, 2004; Heritage 2004). Before moving to a more detailed discussion on classroom interaction, there are two further aspects of CA to address that are crucial to understanding how CA ties classroom interaction to language learning outcomes. They are its assumptions of member competence and shared knowledge.

Let me explain. Foundational to CA is the idea that individuals in talk-in-interaction are competent participants who, in sharing social group membership, share knowledge on which they draw in the accomplishment of their interactional activities. Part of this knowledge includes what Levinson (2006a) refers to as the interaction engine, which consists of a collection of cognitive capacities and motivational dispositions including perception, categorization, memory, and problem solving. It also includes social cognitive skills such as the motivation to seek cooperative interaction, the ability to track actions and to infer the motivations, stances and intentions behind them, and the capacity for creating and interpreting communicative actions in multiple modes, i.e., gesture, gaze, facial and other verbal channels, simultaneously. Also included is the strategic ability to calculate short and long terms costs and gains in taking actions, to attend to signals about the consequences of one's behavior and to move one's actions toward or away from one's goals (Sanders 1987; Goody 1995). This engine is what makes language as a means of communication possible and thus provides the building blocks for a second layer of shared knowledge on which individuals rely for sense-making in their interactional activities.

This second layer is composed of ethnographically-grounded dispositions and expectations about individuals' social worlds. These include knowledge of culture-specific communicative events or activity types and their typical goals and trajectories of actions by which the goals are realized. Also included is knowledge of the prosodic, linguistic, interactional and other verbal and nonverbal tools conventionally used to infer meanings of turns and actions, to construct them so that they are interpreted by others in ways that they are intended to be, and to anticipate and produce larger action sequence configurations (Hymes 1972; Hanks 1996; Ochs 2002). These culture-specific constellations of expectations and dispositions are social in that they are constructed together and shared by social group members as they navigate their way through their interactions with each other. They are cognitive in that they are represented in individuals' minds as context-specific specializations and, as such, they provide some security to members of sociocultural groups in seeking common ground on which they can coordinate their actions and interpretations and maintain a mutual understanding of what is going on (Levinson 1992; Sanders 1987, 2007; Schegloff 1991).

When we talk about classroom-based language learning outcomes, we are referring to this second level of knowledge, the individually-based socially shared dispositions and expectations

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about language and language learning that competent members of language classrooms draw on in the accomplishment of their interactional activities. While CA's theoretical framework helps us to understand the indispensable presence of member competence and shared knowledge in the doing of classroom actions-in-interaction, it does not address, theoretically or empirically, how individuals who are not already competent develop this body of shared knowledge. For this, we need to look beyond the main domain of CA, to cognitive and interactional linguistics and related usage-based approaches to language development.

Evidence from this broad arena suggests that the construction and organization of one's language knowledge is an ongoing, dynamic process that begins in one's interactional experiences with other, more competent participants. Key aspects of one's experiences that contribute to the development of language knowledge are their recurring nature and the distribution and frequency with which specific linguistic components of actions, turns and sequences of actions are encountered in the interactional practices constituting their experiences. The more routine the interactional practices are and the more frequent, predictable and stable the use of particular linguistic and other components is in the unfolding actions of turns and actions sequences, the more likely the components, and the larger set of expectations about the interactional experiences, will be stored and remembered. Also key are cues used in the actions-in-interaction by the more expert participants that make transparent, and call the novice's attention to, particular components and their context–form role relationships. These include verbal cues such as repetition and tone and pitch changes, and nonverbal cues such as gaze and gesture.

Individuals are active agents in this process. They use their interaction-engine capacities for sharing and directing joint attention to register and catalogue their experiences with language. As they engage over time in their recurring interactional activities, they select and attend to specific kinds of information, locate patterns of actions-in-interaction, hypothesize about the meanings and motivations of others' actions, and test to see if their intended goals were met in their interactions. Contrary to traditional thought in SLA, the language knowledge that individuals develop through these processes is not rule-based. As Ellis (2008: 243) notes, 'there are no mechanisms for such top-down governance'. Rather, the collections develop from the ground up, as structured inventories of various kinds of linguistic constructions with meaning acting as the central organizational key. The inventories include the more conventionally recognized lexical and syntactic units as well as less conventionally recognized units including routine formulas, fixed and semi-fixed expressions, and collocations or groupings of units. This is the case for all language learning in all kinds of contexts (Ellis 2008).

To recap, CA, and in particular its theoretical assumptions concerning member competence and shared knowledge, help us to understand classroom language learning outcomes, i.e., target language knowledge, as primarily linguistically embodied expectations and dispositions that are shared by competent members of classroom interactional activities. Furthermore, its analytic methods make visible in minute detail the ways in which such knowledge is made available and used in interaction. Additional evidence from usage-based approaches to language development helps us to understand that the source of such knowledge is in interaction, with individual language knowledge being a derivative phenomenon, emerging as 'a massive collection of heterogeneous CONSTRUCTIONS, each

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with affinities to different contexts and in constant structural adaptation to usage' (Bybee & Hopper 2001: 3; emphasis in the original). As interactional activities vary in terms of their actions and action sequences, so do the arrangements of linguistic resources to which individuals are exposed, and the means by which their attention is directed to them. These interactional differences are what give rise to differences in individual language knowledge. For even a basic understanding of individuals' language knowledge, then, we must know something about the interactional experiences they engage in.

3. Classroom-based L2 outcomes

For those of us interested in understanding classroom-based language learning outcomes, this body of evidence directs us to begin looking for the objects of learning in the interactional practices of language classrooms and, more specifically, in the practical achievements of turns, actions and sequences of actions where teacher and learner attention is shared and directed in these activities. By looking to see where teacher actions in these practices point learners, we can come to understand, just as the learners do, the dispositions and expectations about what constitutes target language and language use – including the context-specific form–function relationships – that the cues intend for them to learn.

From a great deal of discourse and conversation analytic research on classroom interaction we know that the Initiation–Respond–Feedback (IRF) organization is the default interactional practice for all curricular areas including the contexts of second and foreign language classrooms (e.g., Poole 1992; Hall 1995, 1998, 2004b; Hellermann 2003, 2005; Seedhouse 2004). The contribution of this research to the question about L2 outcomes is the microanalytic details it provides on the functions and linguistic resources constituting each of the three actions of this sequence. We know, for example, that the initiation (I) typically takes the form of a teacher question or directive and serves to make public that which is being instructed, i.e., the curriculum. The initiation implicates a second action, the student response (R), where students display their understanding of what they are expected to do and know. The third action, teacher feedback, serves to evaluate the accuracy and/or sufficiency of the student response. If we look at the specific cues used by the teacher in this third action to direct students' attention and observe where they point students' attention, we can locate what the teacher intends for the student to learn, that is, what the L2 outcomes are to be. If the first part of the IRF is a mapping of the curricular territory, the third turn, the F, acts much like the direction systems we find in cars directing drivers to turn right, go straight and so on, thus serving to keep learners on track by continually directing their attention to that-which-is-to-be-learned. In the actions students take in response to these cues, we can see how successful students are in locating and displaying their understandings of the intended L2 outcomes.

3.1 The construction of language learning outcomes in the IRF

The overview of the IRF reveals the basic components by which target language knowledge and the procedures for displaying such knowledge are made publicly available and learnable in classroom interaction. To answer the question of what is in fact being made available and

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learnable in the IRF of language classrooms requires a closer look at the objects to which students' attention is being directed in the use of this practice. Below are examples from two language classrooms. The first comes from a grammar activity conducted in an L2 French classroom in Switzerland designed for newly arrived immigrant children between the ages of 10 and 12 (Mondada & Doehler 2004). (Transcription conventions can be found in the appendix.)

Excerpt 1 (Mondada & Doehler 2004: 508)

1. T: Mohammed?
2. (1.9)
3. T: au suivant
the next
4. (2.4)
5. T: le suivant, (0.5) après ballon
the next, (0.5) after balloon
6. M: ah cette cette trousse
ah this this pencil case
7. T: cette trousse, comment on écrit
this pencil case, how do you write
8. (3)
9. M: té èr [o (.) u [:
t r [o (.) u [: ((spelling))
10. T: [cé:, [NON, trousse c'est écrit. mais cette:
[c ((spelling)) [NO, pencil case it's written. but thi:s
11. (1.4)
12. M: euh ès eu =
ehm s e ((spelling)) =
13. T: = cé,
= c, ((spelling))
14. M: cé eu té (i) té eu
c e t (i) t e ((spelling))>
15. T: cé eu, (.) [té eu.] (.) une phrase avec [()
c e, (.) [t e ((spelling)) (.) one phrase with [()
16. R: [c'est juste]
[that's right]
17. B: [cette chaîne,
[this chain,
18. T: °chhhh::::::° (.) Lorena une phrase avec ce[tte (trousse)
°chhhh::::::° (.) Lorena a phrase with th[is pencil case
19. L: [cette trousse
[this pencil case
20. est dans ma valise
is in my bag
21. T: ok[é:. (.) ou]ais:,
ok[ay:. (.) ye]ah:,
22. B: [( )]
23. P: cette trousse est à moi
This pencil case is mine

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This excerpt begins with the teacher's selection of a student, Mohammed, and after a pause, a brief directive, *au suivant* 'the next'. When a response is not forthcoming, the teacher further directs the student's attention to where he can find the information needed to respond. *Le suivant* 'the next', the teacher says, *après ballon* 'after balloon'. Mohammed's *ah*, in line 6, marking his change of epistemic state (Heritage 1984b) indicates his understanding of the teacher's direction, and he proceeds to state the item found there, *cette cette trousse* 'this this pencil case'. By repeating Mohammed's response with falling intonation, the teacher indicates that Mohammed was correct in locating the object of her directive. She then follows her feedback with a new directive that he spell (line 7).

This directive follows Mohammed's correct production of the located object and so, while it does not specify what is to be spelled, its sequential placement suggests that he spell the object that he just located. Mohammed, however, is apparently unsure of the expected focus of this directive as there is a three-second delay before he commences to speak. He then begins his turn by naming letters. However, after providing just two, the teacher apparently hears Mohammed going in the wrong direction, and so, overlaps his response with an explicit correction. She does so by providing the first letter of the word she intended to be spelled. To further reinforce the incorrectness of Mohammed's curricular attention, the teacher provides an explicit negative assessment, *no*, in line 10, and an explanation of why his response is unacceptable.

After a brief pause and a marker of hesitancy, in line 12, Mohammed offers another response to the directive. As he does, the teacher again hears the letter he provides as incorrect, and immediately offers an explicit correction. Mohammed recognizes the teacher's action as a correction as he repeats it before going on to complete the task. Once completed, the task is given a positive assessment by the teacher, indicated by the repetition of Mohammed's response with falling intonation. We can see in the work that the teacher and Mohammed do together that the curricular focus of this instructional round of IRF is on both the correct placement of the demonstrative *cette* 'this' in a sentence and its orthographic representation.

Following the feedback to Mohammed, the teacher issues a directive to another student, Lorena, as shown in line 18. Lorena is asked to provide a sentence containing a phrase composed of *cette*, the demonstrative just attended to in the previous IRF, plus a noun. This utterance explicitly marks the grammatical collocation of demonstrative-plus-noun as the curricular object of focus in this next round of the IRF and the sentence as the site for displaying this language knowledge. Lorena is quick to anticipate what she is to do as she begins her response before the directive ends. The overlap and lack of apparent hesitations in producing the response suggests that, unlike Mohammed, Lorena is competent in locating the curricular object of focus and in knowing what she is to do. We see in line 21 that the teacher provides a positive assessment of Lorena's display of knowledge. Following the feedback, a different student, P, offers another sentence using the phrase. That P does not wait for a directive from the teacher indicates P's competence in knowing first, that it is his turn and second, what he is expected to do in his turn.

So what exactly is being made available to students to learn in this interactional practice? Or rather, what are the ethnographically grounded, situationally-specific dispositions and expectations about and for language use that are motivated by the IRF? To address this, we need to look at the shape and substance of the recurring teacher actions, which in this excerpt are fairly transparent. We see in lines 3, 5, 7, and 10, for example, that the teacher actions

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are largely explicit directives, confirmations and explicit corrections that point students' attention and resources to matters of form and specifically to the actions of producing in the target language stand-alone complete sentences that are grammatically and orthographically correct. This is of no surprise given that that stated purpose of the activity was to complete a grammar exercise. On the part of the students, we see in their fairly effortless participation that they are competent in drawing on their shared knowledge of the IRF to attend to, make sense of and display their understandings of the unfolding trajectories of action and to use cues such as hesitation and variation in intonation contours to display their understandings of what is to be learned to the teacher and/or request further direction and guidance.

The second example, Excerpt 2, comes from an instructional activity that took place in a first-year Spanish-as-a-foreign-language high school classroom (Hall 2004b). This differs from the first excerpt in that the official purpose of this activity, according to the teacher, was to engage students in the communicative practice of speaking Spanish, rather than doing grammar.

Excerpt 2 (Hall 2004b: 78)

1. T: Sueño (.) tiene sueño (.) ¿ Tienes sueño señor?
(*sleepy he is sleepy are you sleepy sir*)
2. S1: No I'm great feeling great
3. T: [No tengo
(*I'm not*)
4. S2: [Tengo sueño
(*I'm sleepy*)
5. S1: No tengo es swal [swal
6. T: [sueño
7. S1: No tengo sueño
(*I'm not sleepy*)
8. T: No tengo sueño. (*to another student*) ¿ Tú tienes sueño señor? la verdad
I'm not sleepy are you sleepy sir the truth
9. (.)
10. T: sí
(*yes*)
11. S2: ()
12. T: Tengo sueño
(*I'm sleepy*)
13. S2: Sí tengo sueño
(*I'm sleepy*)
14. T: Sí tengo sueño sí tengo sueño
(*yes I'm sleepy yes I'm sleepy*)

The excerpt begins with a three-part initiation performed by the teacher in which the Spanish word *sueño* 'sleep' is uttered, and after a brief pause, there follows a sentence using the word. After another brief pause, a question using the word is directed to a student. The repetition of the word in three different arrangements – as one word, as a complete sentence, and as a student-directed question – all in Spanish, along with the brief pauses between them, suggests that the teacher intends to direct student attention to this word and to the expectation that it be produced in a complete sentence in Spanish, the shape of which is to be modeled after the sentence provided by the teacher.

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The propositional content of S1's response to the question, given in English in line 2, indicates that he understands the question. However, it is not produced according to expectations and thus does not receive a positive assessment from the teacher. Instead, the teacher repeats part of S1's response in Spanish and leaves the remainder of the sentence to be completed by S1. In providing her utterance in Spanish, the teacher's feedback takes the form of explicit correction, directing the student's attention to the fact that to be considered correct, the response must be in Spanish. By producing only part of the expected display of knowledge, the feedback also acts as a prompt, which serves to further direct the student's attention to the expectation that he use the curricular object-to-be-learned, which in this case is the word *sueño*, rather than using other words to describe his state. Apparently, the teacher hears S1's unfolding response in line 5 as an unsuccessful attempt to produce the curricular object, as she begins to further remediate with explicit correction by repeating the word in Spanish before the student completes his response. We see in line 7 SI's uptake of the teacher's work. Here he displays his understanding not only of the focal object, but also of what the teacher expects him to do with that knowledge by restating his earlier claim as a complete sentence in Spanish using the correct word. The teacher repeats S1's complete response with falling intonation and so marks it as successful.

The teacher's next move, in line 8, is apparently to further reinforce the curricular lesson as the same question that was initially posed to S1 is posed now to S2. This initiation differs from the first, however, in that the teacher does not first state the word and a sentence using the word before asking the question. This suggests that the teacher is satisfied that the curricular object of attention and the procedures for displaying that knowledge are now known to the students and so do not require further explicit attention. In this part of the activity, we see that the teacher poses the question to a student who had earlier, in line 2, produced a response. It may be that the teacher did not hear this response as she was attending to S1's response at the time. Or, it could be that she did indeed hear it and has decided that it also needs remediation. In any case, after asking the question, the teacher adds a qualifier by directing that the response be truthful, *la verdad* (line 8).

After a brief pause, which the teacher apparently interprets as S2's need for help, she provides the prompt *sí* 'yes' which begins the sought-answer response, but leaves the completion of the sentence to S2. The juxtaposition of a directive for a truthful statement with a prompt that makes apparent the kind of truth statement the teacher is seeking poses a challenge to S2. To produce an acceptable response, the student must be able to understand that he is to orient to the prompt and not to the modified directive. Since the response in line 11 was not audible on the recording equipment, it is difficult to know the level of knowledge being displayed by the student and the kind of work the teacher's utterance is doing in line 12. However, given that the teacher is looking for responses that produce complete sentences in Spanish using the curricular object of attention, *sueño*, and the teacher's response is a partial completion, that is, it does not include the prompt given earlier, we can infer that it is not a positive assessment of the student response. Instead, it appears to be displaying to the student what he is expected to produce, and so, is providing explicit correction. This inference is further supported by the fact that in line 11, S2 provides the sought-after complete sentence, displaying to the teacher his successful uptake of her feedback. With her repetition of S2's response in line 14, the teacher both affirms the correctness of S2's response and provides a positive evaluation.

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As with the first excerpt, to understand the L2 outcomes that are intended by this interactional practice, we need to look at the teacher's actions, specifically at her initiations and follow-ups to student responses, as these moments are where the teacher draws learners' attention to those specific actions and their linguistic components that learners are expected to learn. In this excerpt, the cues are not as transparent as in the first example. This teacher does not use directives and explicit corrections to capture and direct students' attention. Instead, as we see in lines 1, 3, 6, and 8, she relies on prompts and repetitions to point students' attention to, and reinforce expectations about, what one needs to do and know to be able to speak Spanish. As we saw in the first example, and contrary to the official purpose of the activity, the teacher's actions here draw students' attention and resources to matters of form and specifically to the actions of producing in the target language grammatically and phonetically accurate, complete sentences in Spanish using specific lexical and syntactic items that are provided by the teacher.

To recap, here we have seen two interactional methods whose official instructional purposes differ. The first aimed to build skills and knowledge needed for the accurate production of forms. The second aimed to build communicative skills and knowledge needed to speak the target language. However, their official purposes tell us nothing about the real curricular focus of the practice, i.e., about the kinds of language knowledge and skills that are actually made publicly available and learnable. For this, we needed to look to at what actually took place, in the moment-to-moment unfolding of the teachers' interactional actions in the IRF, and specifically at the cues used to direct learners' attention to specific components of the interaction. In both examples, we found the curricular focus to be on learner production of grammatically accurate complete sentences.

4. Are students learning?

From our examination of these teachers' interactional methods, we know what they are expecting the students to learn. So the question arises, are they learning? If we take as one indication of learning that students are able to produce the expected knowledge and skills with the skilled other, but without help, we can see some evidence of this in both excerpts. In Excerpt 1, for example, P knew when to take his turns without any apparent cue by the teacher and his production of the linguistic forms of focus was both appropriate and accurate. In Excerpt 2, both S1 and S2 displayed their understanding of the work that teacher repetition was doing, knowing that in this activity it served the specialized dual instructional purpose of providing a model of expected student response and an evaluation of students' demonstration of the expected behavior. They were able to use these understandings to display the language knowledge to which the teacher's actions were directing them. Even stronger evidence of learning comes from Lorena's performance in Excerpt 1. We saw there that Lorena was able to undertake the actions that were directed her way with no help from the teacher. In fact, as pointed out earlier, she actually began her response before the teacher directive ended, evidencing competence in both her knowledge of the specific linguistic forms of curricular focus and the skills for displaying that knowledge.

Given the interdependent relationship between classroom interaction and language learning, and the ubiquity of the IRF in language classrooms, we can speculate that the basic organization of the L2 knowledge of individuals who have been schooled in classrooms

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is grammatically accurate complete sentences. Furthermore, we can expect such knowledge and skills to be portable to settings outside the classroom. Unfortunately, I can find no study that has examined such displays of learner language knowledge in other settings. However, if we look beyond the academic literature, we can find quite a few of them. One highly popular example can be found on YouTube (http://www.youtube.com). The site features the video THE ONE SEMESTER OF SPANISH SPANISH LOVE SONG,[5] which is advertised as a video on how to romance a girl with one semester of Spanish. It lasts just over a minute and a half and shows a young man singing with great passion in Spanish to a young woman. Despite the young man's facial gestures and nonverbal behavior suggesting that he is expressing deep feelings for her, the young woman takes no notice of him. The song ends with the man walking away looking somewhat aggrieved by the lack of the woman's attention. What is remarkable about the video, and pertinent to our interests here, is the response that it has engendered from the viewing audience. Rather than creating feelings of sadness that one would expect from a conventional song about unrequited love, the video has produced great amusement among its over 2.5 million viewers worldwide, so much so, in fact, that in March 2008 it was voted by Yahoo Video as one of the top five comedy videos of 2008.[6] To discover the reason for the hilarity we need to look at the song's lyrics. The following is a sampling of what the young man sings in Spanish, with the English translation (by the present author) following:

> *Hola, señorita. ¿ Cómo te llamas? Me llamo Mike, me llamo Mike. ¿ Donde está el baño? Feliz cumpleaños. ¿ Qué hora es? ¿ Qué hora es? Lalalalala. Me gusta la biblioteca. Vivo en la casa roja. Yo tengo dos bicicletas. Muchas gracias y de nada. ¿ Cuántos años tienes? Un momento por favor. Mi mama es bonita. Mi gato es muy blanco.*
>
> Hello, miss. What's your name? I am called Mike. I am called Mike. Where is the bathroom? Happy birthday. What time is it? What time is it? Lalalalala. I like the library. I live in a red house. I have two bicycles. Thank you and you are welcome. How old are you? One moment please. My mother is pretty. My cat is very white.

We see here that the lyrics are predominantly marked by the highly competent, indeed, very creative production of grammatically accurate complete sentences. This is exactly the kind of language knowledge and skills made available in the IRF of the two language classrooms we examined earlier. Arguably, it is the lyrics' likeness to such language classroom interaction and, more importantly, the viewing audiences' familiarity with it and the language knowledge and skills it engenders, and their parodic juxtaposition to the man's dramatic performance that produces the hilarity.

5. Conclusion

We already know a great deal about the kind of language knowledge learners are expected to develop in the IRF of language classrooms. What we do not know is whether there are other regularly occurring interactional practices constituted in teacher–student interaction in classrooms that engender other kinds of language knowledge and skills. If the IRF were the only practice, it would certainly constrain learners' development of a range of communicative repertoires for taking action in their L2 worlds outside the classroom. Unfortunately, the

[5] Produced by Runaway Box, the clip can be found at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ngRq82c8Bawaaaaaa.
[6] See http://video.yahoo.com/network/100268455.

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question about additional interactional practices is one that apparently has not generated much research interest. I do not know whether this is because it is difficult to get access to sites where other practices are used, or if we have overlooked other practices because they do not appear to be as instructional as this practice appears to be, and so not worth investigating. Or maybe there are no other practices to be found in teacher–student interaction. That could certainly help explain the pervasive view of what it means to know another language that is found both within and outside of academia as primarily, if not solely, about the production of grammatically accurate sentences. Whatever the case, these are questions certainly worth investigating.

For now, the more important point to take away has to do with the mutually constitutive nature of classroom interaction and language learning that the framework I have outlined here presents to us. The specific point is this: what students take away from their classrooms in terms of target language knowledge and skills is intimately tied to the kinds of interactional practices that teachers create in their talk with students. The work of teaching and learning, then, is done 'not propositionally OR "behaviorally" but praxiologically, as practical tasks and orientations' (Macbeth 2000: 59; emphasis is in original). Thus, the question about how language is acquired and represented in the mind of an individual learner can only be answered by looking first not at WHAT is being talked about in classroom interaction, but at HOW the talk is being accomplished in the interactional practices used to teach. And so, going forward, research on classroom-based language learning must be tied to research on language teaching. To paraphrase the quote I began with: The search for interactional practices becomes one of the most important problems of the entire enterprise of understanding individual language learning, for teaching practices are simultaneously prerequisite and product, the tools and the results of language learning.

Appendix A: Transcript conventions

[ ]	Left and right brackets indicate beginning and end of overlap
(0,0)	Numbers in parentheses indicate silence by tenths of seconds
(.)	Micropause
::	Colons indicate prolongation of the immediately prior sound. The longer the row of colons, the longer the prolongation
.,?¿	Punctuation markers are used to indicate intonation: , level intonation ; slightly falling intonation . falling intonation to low ¿ slightly rising intonation ? rising intonation to high
°word°	Degree signs bracketing a sound, word, phrase, etc., indicate especially soft sounds relative to the surrounding talk
=	No gap between turns or parts of turns
()	Inability to hear what was said
((word))	Transcriber's description

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444809005722 Published online by Cambridge University Press

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