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Conversation Analysis: A Focused, Evidence-based Methodology for Teacher-Scholars

In our session, we will present and discuss our writing lab and foreign language (Japanese) classroom-based research in which we use conversation analysis (CA) as a method for analyzing tutor-tutee and teacher-student interactions. Conversation analysts observe, record, describe, and explicate naturally occurring conversations. They do so by audio/video recording interactions, and then transcribing and analyzing them. Schegloff (1986) sees CA as a means by which “to show that the raw data of everyday conversational interaction [can] be subjected to rigorous analysis” (p. 349). Thus, CA is a focused, evidence-based methodology with extensive applications for teaching and learning.

The primary objective for our session is to inform audience members about how they can use CA to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of interactions in two settings: 1) tutorial sessions between tutors whose native language is English (NS) and tutees whose native language is not English (NNS) In such tutorials, cultural and linguistic diversity compel tutors to better understand how, through interactions, tutees bridge communication gaps and construct their identities. 2) the foreign language classroom where the teacher whose native language is Japanese and students whose native language is usually English negotiate communication and construct their identities. We focus on the construction of identities because we believe that learning outcomes can be affected by the degree to which tutees and students accommodate to the cultures of the writing lab and the foreign language classroom. After showing video clips and the accompanying transcriptions of tutor-tutee and teacher-student interactions, we will ask audience members to comment on their observations of the interactions. We will then propose our own analyses, elicit audience feedback, and generate further discussion about how CA can be used to enhance teaching and learning. Audience members will gain a new understanding of the powerful tool that CA methodology can be to expand their scholarship and to enhance their own teaching practices.

References

Schegloff, E. (1986). Sequencing in conversational openings. In J. Gumperz & D. Hymes, (Eds.), *Directions in sociolinguistics*. (pp. 346-380). Oxford: Basis Blackwell.