

Language of the Classroom Project
Part II: Analyzing the Language of the Classroom
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Key to notations:

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| (black text in parentheses) | Descriptive (non-analytical) comments on discourse features, used to describe non-verbal communication and to provide clarification or context. |
| [green text in brackets] | Analytical comments on discourse features (scaffolding functions, steps in the IRE sequence, and student-proposed intertextual links appear in parentheses using the conventional abbreviations from lessons 1-5). |
| ... | Used to indicate a pause of less than five seconds or a point in the discourse at which a speaker was interrupted. |
| (...inaudible...) | Inaudible or incomprehensible speech of more than five seconds |
| (inaudible) | Inaudible or incomprehensible speech of less than five seconds |

Transcript #1

*Transcript #1 comes from near the end of this advanced class of four students (first initial*S), although only three of the students participate in this segment. The teacher (T) has decided to draw on her personal experiences as a vehicle for presenting one of the lesson's target vocabulary items (the phrasal verb "bring up"), although her initiation of the academic task is delayed as the students ask questions about her life experiences in what appears to be genuine personal interest. This segment is characterized by a substantial amount of teacher talk (including liberal doses of wondering out loud and feedback), which appears to provide the learners with high quality input while fostering spontaneous language use in an authentic context.*

- 1 T: OK, so (5 second pause). Did I tell you where I was brought up? [Initiation act (I) in which the teacher modeled (D) the target verb form. As suggested in the next three turns, the academic task structure was unclear and the students did not realize that this question was intended as an entry into the lesson on phrasal verbs. As seen below, the students apparently interpreted this as a referential question instead of a display question.]
- 2 C*S: No. [This may not have been the response (R) that the teacher was expecting.]
- 3 T: No?
- 4 A*S: No.
- 5 C*S: No, no. You were brought up in Puerto... [The teacher had mentioned this at the

- beginning of the class, about 45 earlier.]
- 6 A*S: Puerto Rico.
- 7 T: Puerto Rico. [The teacher provided feedback by repeating the students' response, a strategy she used throughout the class.] Yeah, well when I was really little, when I was born. I grew up in Puerto Rico. And I was brought up by my mom only. Cause my dad, he was in the U.S. Um... [Here, the teacher took on the role of "sharer of experience."]
- 8 C*S: (Interrupting) Yeah, but your father is American.
- 9 T: Um, yeah. He's...he's kind of American. (smiles and laughs)
- 10 Students: (Laugh)
- 11 T: One of those, you know, mixed citizenships. We grew up everywhere.
- 12 C*S: Oh, he's an alien, right? Yeah?
- 13 T: Um, no, actually, he's a citizen. [The teacher chose not to correct the student's lexical error (the contextually-inappropriate use of *alien*).]
- 14 C*S: Oh, he is?
- 15 T: Yeah, but his...his name is Spanish, because his (...inaudible...) he grew up in Puerto Rico too.
- 16 A*S: Oh.
- 17 T: Then he moved to Arizona.
- 18 A*S: Cool.
- 19 T: I have one of those families where everyone grew up in different places. Yeah, I'm American but that doesn't mean anything cause being American means that you could be from North America or South America. [Wondering out loud and taking on the role of "reflector."] Right? [It is unclear whether this question was rhetorical or intended as an initiation act (I).]
- 20 A*S: Um hm.
- 21 T: Somebody who's American can say, "yeah, I'm American"...
- 22 C*S: (Interrupting) Yeah, but you were born in Puerto Rico?
- 23 T: I was born in Puerto Rico, um hm. [More feedback through repetition of the student's response] I was born in Puerto Rico. Yeah... I was brought up there by uh, by my uncle.
- 24 C*S: And you, you came to the, um, United States?
- 25 T: I started living full time here around, um, ninety-four, ninety-five? And before that, I would live like half of the year here, I would with my dad and then half of the year I was in Puerto Rico and sometimes I was in Chile, cause my mom's, some of her family is from Chile... [Wondering out loud while continuing to share her personal experiences.]
- 26 C*S: (Interrupting) I really like Chile.
- 27 T: So, it's, you know, one of those things, I spent (...inaudible...) language, everything at the same time. It's crazy. But what I want to really focus on is, look at this verb up here (points to the phrasal verb *bring up*, which she had written on the board earlier). [At this point, the teacher asserted thematic and interactional control to clearly signal a change to the academic task structure.] Right. So, I was brought up by my mom. [Demonstration (D) the target form] She brought me up, right? [Here, the teacher demonstrated (D) the target syntax. It will become clear later in this segment that she was modeling the separability

- of this phrasal verb.]
- 28 A*S: Um hm.
- 29 T: (Looking at Abdul) [Recruitment (R) through non-verbal communication] Who brought you up? [Initiation act (I) with what was presumably a display question]
- 30 A*S: My mom, of course.
- 31 T: Your mom. [Again, the teacher provided feedback by repeating the student's response, although she was not yet aware that the student had failed to understand the question's intended meaning, despite his situationally appropriate answer.] OK ...
- 32 A*S: (Interrupting) You mean... Sorry, what is it that you are asking me? [The student disrupted the IRE sequence to ask for clarification before the teacher could provide an evaluation act (E).]
- 33 T: As in, um, helped you to grow, when you were a child. [Marking a critical feature (MCF) of the academic task by defining the target vocabulary item]
- 34 C*S: Yeah, your parents. [Student-provided feedback]
- 35 T: Your parents. [Feedback through repetition without evaluation]
- 36 A*S: OK.
- 37 T: Are you familiar with that phrasal verb? [An initiation act (I) in which a critical feature was marked (MCF) using conventionalized language]
- 38 A*S: Yeah, I thought it was like, brought up like (gestures to his abdomen with both hands and moves them outward)...(interrupted by the laughter of other students)
- 39 Students: (Laugh)
- 40 A*S: Like, as a pregnancy.
- 41 Students: (Laugh)
- 42 T: Um, gave birth! (emphasizing the phrasal verb *gave birth*)
- 43 A*S: Gave birth, OK.
- 44 T: No, not who gave birth to you. I would assume that's your mom. (jokingly) [This was the only instance in this segment when the teacher explicitly corrected or commented on a student's error.]
- 45 Students: (Laugh)
- 46 C*S: Yeah.
- 47 A*S: Yes, of course.
- 48 T: OK. Good. Um. So, notice that, do you know what kind of phrasal verb that is? (long pause) [Initiation act (I) allowing students to self-nominate; none did.] What do we call that kind of phrasal verb? (Pauses for about ten seconds, waiting for a student to volunteer). Is that a separable or non-separable phrasal verb? [Here, the teacher reduced the degree of freedom (RDF) twice, slightly at first by indicating that she was asking for the name of a particular type of phrasal verb, and then sharply by providing the only two possible responses while simultaneously marking a critical feature (MCF) of the academic task, which allowed Abdul to answer correctly in the next turn.]
- 49 A*S: Separable. [Student response (R)]
- 50 T: Separable, right? [More feedback through repetition] Um, when I have a pronoun, where do I put that pronoun? (Draws on the whiteboard). [Expansion (E) of the student's response] She brought me up. [Demonstrating (D) the correct form] Right? Can you conjugate this one? She brought me up. Um. Who

brought you up? (Seven second pause) [An initiation act (I) that went unanswered] I was brought up by my mom, my dad, my parents. OK? So I want to review a couple of those phrasal verbs with you guys. And then from there, I want to finish up the class with you guys writing some stuff. [Here, at the end of this segment, the teacher abandoned the IRE sequence she began a few seconds earlier to make the academic task structure explicit.]

The social participation structure in this segment is loose, with students free to interject (self-nominate) until near the end of the segment, when the teacher resumes the IRE sequence. Despite the fact that the teacher's initial initiation act was intended to start a form-based activity focusing on phrasal verbs, a large portion of the interaction focused on meaning, as the students were apparently unaware that the teacher was beginning a structured, form-based activity (when she asked the students if they knew where she was "brought up," they apparently interpreted the question as referential rather than display). Interestingly, instead of resuming the IRE sequence that she initiated in turn 1, the teacher decided to allow the conversation to follow its natural course for over a minute and a half, wondering out loud while allowing the students to engage in authentic, loosely structured discourse in an authentic context (one of the optimal conditions for classroom second language learning identified in lesson 4). It is only near the end of the segment (turn 48) that the teacher decides to reassert thematic and interactional control to return to the originally-planned academic task.

Transcript #2

*Transcript #2 is taken from the middle of the class during a conversation on differences between postsecondary education in the United States and the students' countries of origin. The teacher has introduced the topic of liberal arts education in the United States and during her monologue, student Crissy (C*S) interrupts to provide a substantial contribution to the discussion. After Crissy completes her input, the teacher drafts Ran (R*S), who rarely self-nominates, into the conversation. The academic task structure is not well defined (the conversation is essentially an open exchange of ideas and information on the topic) and the social participation structure is loose, with the students and teacher free to enter the conversation at will, including through interrupting and overlapping talk, which is substantial.*

- 1 T: Now, I want to go back to the universities. So, do you have anything called like "liberal arts," the equivalent of what "liberal arts" would be here? [Initiation act (I) using what appeared to be a referential question] Because sometimes what happens in the U.S. is that you know, you finish high school and then you don't really know. Do I want to be a lawyer? Do I want to be an architect? Do I want to be, you know, a doctor? [Display questions] So you go into college and you study for four years liberal arts. So you study a little bit of philosophy...
- 2 C*S: (Interrupting) Really?
- 3 T: [The teacher ignores the student's interruption and continues her monologue, taking on the role of summarizer of information.] You study a little bit of science. You study anthropology. You study astronomy. You study linguistics. You study a little bit of everything...
- 4 A*S: (Interrupting) No, we don't. [Here, the student provided an intertextual (LCL) link

- to her primary culture.]
- 5 T: You don't have that? [Paraphrasing the student's comment] Really?
- 6 C*S: No.
- 7 A*S: We have...
- 8 T: (Interrupting) And when you finish that, it's good in a way. I mean, you do have to choose a concentration. Let's say, I'll take more classes in, um, a science-related field. So when I finish, I have... [The teacher continued to assert interactional control, intent on completing her monologue despite the students' repeated interruptions.]
- 9 A*S: (Interrupting) You know then a...
- 10 T: (Interrupting) A bachelor in arts...
- 11 A*S: (Interrupting/overlapping) Yeah.
- 12 T: OK? And that means, a little bit of everything...
- 13 A*S: (Interrupting/overlapping) (Inaudible)
- 14 T: And then from there, I'll choose a master's in something else, which I think is really good, because you finish, you know, you leave this place very well-rounded. [This appeared to be a bit of wondering out loud as the teacher continued her role as summarizer of information.]
- 15 C*S: No, it's very good, because I changed like so many times. It's like, you change, but it's good because if you're applying for a job and somebody's like "well, you need to work in this area" and like, you know, it's like, it's very... [The teacher surrendered interactional control to allow the student to speak and provide this personal intertextual link (PL).]
- 16 T: (Interrupting/overlapping) You need to know exactly...
- 17 C*S: (Interrupting) Yeah, and it's very complete. You know? My sister, sometimes, she like changes, she, she studied law, and sometimes she changes like the area that she wants to work. She wanted to work with international, like working with banks, and now she wants to work with oil and gas, and that's what she wants. So like, she decided to change... [Providing additional personal intertextual links (PL)]
- 18 T: (Interrupting) But she stayed within the field? [Here, the teacher took on the role of questioner, asking a referential question to allow the conversation to continue its natural course.]
- 19 C*S: She's in the field, but like, the thing is like, she's learning that, and she learned that (inaudible), so you know, so you can change. That's the good thing. You know, because you have to work, like you have to do an internship...
- 20 T: (Interrupting) You have to do internships. [Paraphrasing and taking on the role of affirmer.]
- 21 C*S: Yes, you have to, so.
- 22 T: You, um, Ran, were surprised when uh, when Crissy was saying that university is free. [Active recruitment (R) of a student who has decided not to self-nominate during the conversation] So, it's not free in Korea? [Initiation act (I) consisting of a referential question.]
- 23 R*S: Yeah, not free? No! [Response act (R)]
- 24 C*S: You don't have public university? [Here, the more proficient student took on the role of teacher to finish the IRE sequence, providing an expansion [E] instead of evaluation, an acceptable—an interesting—variation of the IRE sequence.]

- 25 R*S: We have public university but it's not free. It's cheaper than tra-di-... (struggling with the word *traditional*) [Here, the student offered an intertextual link to her primary cultural (LCL).]
- 26 A*S: Traditional. [This more proficient student scaffolded the less proficient student's language use by demonstrating (D) the correct form.]
- 27 R*S: Traditional university, but it's not free. If you are come with a grant (pointing to Crissy), you are free.
- 28 C*S: Yeah.
- 29 T: So you get scholarships? [Instead of correcting Ran's language errors, the teacher affirmed the student's contribution and essentially paraphrased the student's comment by demonstrating (D) a relevant new vocabulary item (*scholarship*).]
- 30 A*S: Helps.
- 31 T: If you are a very, very good student? [Direction maintenance (DM)]
- 32 R*S: Yeah. A very, very good job, if it's free, scholarship. But it's not free. [An additional intertextual link (LCL) offered by Ran]
- 33 C*S: Public school here is free. [This student-offered intertextual link related the student's knowledge of United States culture (LCL) to the topic being discussed by the class.]
- 34 T: Public universities, um... [The teacher appeared to be unsure whether Crissy was referring to primary/secondary school or postsecondary education. Because the teacher was interrupted before she could complete her sentence, it is unclear what type of elicitation, question or comment the teacher intended here.]
- 35 A*S: (Interrupting/overlapping) Not university—school. [Interestingly, in this turn Abdul appeared to correct the teacher's misinterpretation of Crissy's prior statement. This is an excellent example of how the students and teachers worked together in this discussion to co-construct meaning.]
- 36 C*S: School.
- 37 T: Schools: elementary and high school. Yeah, those are free. [Here, the teacher took on the role of both affirmer and clarifier.]
- 38 C*S: Those are free. And here, it's very good. Like, they're one of the best, right?
- 39 T: Um, that's debatable... [Taking on the role of answerer and reflector, sharing her personal opinion]
- 40 C*S: (Interrupting) Not here in Miami, but in the United States. [Continuing to connect her knowledge of United States culture and society and her personal beliefs to the lesson's theme.]
- 41 T: In general, in the U.S., public schools are OK. [Again taking on the role of reflector, sharing her personal opinion with the class.]
- 42 C*S: Oh, they're OK?
- 43 R*S: OK?
- 44 C*S: Cause they always say that...
- 45 T: (Interrupting) Yeah, just OK. It really depends on the city that you're in. It really depends on the city... [More reflection]
- 46 C*S: (Interrupting) Like, New York, it's very bad?
- 47 T: Yeah, it depends on the city again. You know, there are some public schools that are really, really good, and some that aren't so good. Usually, in the suburbs they're a little bit better than in the inner city. [Answering Crissy's question and providing

- 48 A*S: Oh, I see. [In this last turn of the segment, Abdul acknowledges the teacher's contribution and demonstrates comprehension.]

*One of the most striking features of this set of exchanges is how the teacher and students co-constructed meaning and contributed to the overall discussion as equal partners. The teacher chose not to correct any language errors (thereby allowing the conversation to continue uninterrupted and ensuring the lesson maintained its strong focus on meaning while declining to assert social dominance in the interactions) and ceded a great deal of thematic and interactional control to her students, which they (especially Crissy) readily accepted. Although student Abdul (A*S) did not speak often, his contributions were particularly interesting, as he took on the teacher's role, first as scaffolder in turn 26 (in which he demonstrated the correct form of the word traditional for student Ran) and then in turn 35, when he seemed to correct the teacher's misunderstanding of Crissy's comment in the prior turn. Abdul's timely contributions, while brief, demonstrate a high level of interactional competence. By permitting her students to enjoy high degrees of thematic and interactional control, the teacher made possible the discourse conditions that engender productive student-student interactions and facilitate classroom language acquisition.*