MASKED PEDAGOGY: NEGOTIATING SELF, TOPIC AND EXPERTISE IN CONVERSATION-FOR-LEARNING

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Abstract

The research analyzes interaction between unacquainted teachers and students of English as a foreign language in the conversation lounge of a private university in Japan. It draws its primary data from an assigned task in which students were asked to make conversation with on-duty teachers. Such institutionalized conversation practice, or conversation-for-learning, is problematized in the thesis of research, as it is taken to paradoxically blend elements of institutionality with the interpersonal goals of conversation making. An English-only policy and official recommendation that students pre-select topic present two significant elements of institutionality which are explored through discourse analysis and ethnography. The research uncovers tensions resolved by the teachers at the level of self construction, controverting their institutionally inscribed role as 'authentic' native speaking partners in the designated 'conversation'. As the foreign culture of the teacher emerges as the predominant theme, it represents a further facet of 'authenticity' to be critically examined.

1. INTRODUCTION

Set within the institutional confines of a Japanese university, the research critically examines interaction which is institutionally designated as 'conversation' between native speaking teachers and L2 students of English. It seeks to problematize such seemingly free conversation by analyzing conflicting elements of institutionality as these become manifest in interaction and are reflexively defined by the participants in ethnographic interview and focus group accounts.

In particular, the focus is placed on the teachers, who find themselves on duty in the university's conversation lounge, and thereby serve as institutional native speaking representatives in the

supposedly conversational event. As Kramsch (1998: 79) points out, "[n]ative speakers have traditionally enjoyed a natural prestige as language teachers, because they are seen as not only embodying the 'authentic' use of the language, but as representing its original context as well". The authenticity of foreign representations in Japan has been challenged by Seargeant (2005), however, who presents this as a simulated reality, as epitomized in the popular spectacle of the foreign theme park (*gaikoku mura*). The English language learning scene can itself represent a hyper-real environment, which is "more English than England itself" (Seargeant 2005: 326). Monolingual or English-only policies in educational contexts of interaction may, then, further thematize the language, with the native speaking teachers serving as both 'authentic' speakers and fashionably alien representations of foreignness personified.

The English-only policy of the conversation lounge is thus the initial element of institutionality to be analyzed in the empirical section of the thesis with regard to the negotiated self of the teacher. As the students are also officially advised to pre-select a topic prior to approaching a teacher on duty in the lounge, this represents the next focus of analysis. The research explores the way in which student topic nomination impinges on the trajectory of the first-time 'conversations' in the self-presentational phases of interaction. With the students commonly selecting the teacher's country of origin as the topic of interaction, culture becomes framed as the teacher's domain of expertise, further compounding the construction of 'authentic' self as interactionally emergent and interculturally distributed.

2. CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW: CONVERSATION AND THE INSTITUTIONAL DISCOURSE OF PEDAGOGY

The first body chapter of the thesis provides a review of the literature and concepts which inform the research. It starts by separately delineating conversation and institutional discourse, a distinction which serves to uphold a somewhat tenuous but analytically insightful contrast between

conversational selves and institutional roles. While conversation and institutional discourse might best be viewed as part of an interactional continuum, underpinned by varying degrees of interpersonal and instrumental commitments (Holmes 2000), the frames which manifest themselves in interaction, signalling the participants' expectations and interpretations of what is being done (Goffman 1974, Tannen 1984), can reveal instances in which the two diverge and conflict. As interaction which is staged in pursuit of L2 learning (Kasper 2004), conversation-for-learning between teacher and student furthermore represents the explicit institutionalization of the normative practice of conversation making.

Conversation is itself often defined as the non-institutional pursuit of interpersonal goals, and at its 'best' may arguably represent the interactional locus in which we feel "most ourselves" (Eggins and Slade 1997: 16). It is one of the means by which we construct and maintain the everyday reality of our social worlds (Berger and Luckmann 1966). As such, it represents a largely normative pursuit. Although the modern-day self may be increasingly reflexive, as we critically monitor ourselves through life choices and circumstances which present us with an ongoing narrative of who we believe we are, or who we claim to be (Coupland 2003, Giddens 1991), it may be so to a greater or a lesser extent, as in the latter case of seemingly 'ordinary' conversation. Nevertheless, conversation might be defined on closer analytic scrutiny by its overall orientation to interpersonal goals, interactional symmetry and ease of topical accessibility to participants.

Firstly, the interpersonal, or relational, commitment of the interlocutors would appear to override instrumental concerns (even if merely strategically employed to do so). The ideal of phatic communion, whereby human beings seek in the act of speaking to create or nurture "personal bonds of union" (Malinowski [1923] 1949: 314), suggests that the conventions of conversation are, at least, interpersonal by design (Coupland 2000, Thornbury and Slade 2006). Although simplistic

distinctions between relationality and instrumentality may be untenable, either one may appear to predominate at any one time in interaction (Cheepen 1988).

Secondly, conversationalized modes of discourse, however transitory, generally manifest an interactional symmetry and relative parity of status among adult-participants. This results from a seeming equality of speaking rights, as can be inferred from Malinowski's ([1923] 1949) initial discussion of phatic communion, in which he noted the reciprocity involved in the changing roles of speaker and listener. The participants are portrayed as either speaking, or waiting to do so, i.e. for their own 'turn'. The actual turn-taking mechanism of speaker change is extensively described in the conversation analytic (CA) tradition of research, in which conversation is typified by "one turn at a time allocation" (Sacks et al. 1978: 46), with participants apparently free to select their speaking turns 'locally', i.e. contingent on the interaction as it unfolds. This contrasts with more formalized events in which turns are, to varying degrees, pre-allocated (Sacks et al. 1978). In other words, the pre-defined conventions and goals of an event, such as a meeting, place certain constraints on who speaks when and can say and do what in the course of its proceedings. An equality of speaking rights has therefore been presented as a defining criterion of conversation (e.g. Good 1979, Marková 1990, Schneider 1988, Wilson 1989). In the lack of any clearly defined external constraints, the participants are normatively free to construct an 'as-if-equality' in conversation (Marková 1990), even if existing social inequalities might skew perceived participatory rights. The maintenance of parity further requires that participants interactionally negate status differences pertaining to institutional roles (Cheepen 1988). As such, conversation allows for the transience and interchangeability of expert status: the current expert may become the subsequent novice, and the current novice the subsequent expert.

Thirdly, the topics of conversation are by and large easily accessible to the participants. Furthermore, by contrast with the institutional discourse of meetings, whose topics are often clearly identified and demarcated from one another as the participants interactionally pursue the given agenda under the direction of a chair, conversation is frequently characterized by an unplanned stepwise progression of topic (Jefferson 1984, Sacks 1995 Vol. 2). This involves forging a thematic link with the previous speaker's utterance in a process of topic 'chaining' (Bergmann 1990, Tracy 1984).

These three elements of relationality, symmetry and topical accessibility are also apparent in informal interaction among unacquainted interlocutors, who lack any 'personal common ground' established through prior acquaintanceship and a shared history of interaction (Clark 1996). For this reason, the initial phases of interaction are often marked by a tentative process of other-discovery, manifesting self-presentational sequences in which uncertainties are interactionally reduced (Svennevig 1999), commonly initiated by categorization questions, such as "what do you do?", or "where are you from?" (cf. Maynard and Zimmerman 1984, Svennevig 1999). Such self-presentational phases are relationally governed by a loose convention of reciprocity, thus effecting symmetry in interaction as the participants take turns to respond to questions on a subject to which they are both, respectively, the experts, i.e. themselves.

The interpersonal development of conversation often hinges on the establishment of mutual interest and interrelation of experiences, or co-membership in the same (sub-)cultural group. This enables the participants to chart "common territories of self" (Maynard and Zimmerman 1984: 314), whereby they are able to ascertain a common base of knowledge and inferential framework of topical relevance. Despite lacking personal common ground, they may therefore be able to establish

communal common ground, i.e. "information based on the cultural communities a person is believed to belong to" (Clark 1996: 121).

In sum, although conversation is ultimately tempered by the very sociality which represents its underpinning goal, its implicit normativity differs from the evidently external constraints of institutional discourse, which is often correspondingly defined as non-conversational (Agar 1985, Sarangi 1998). That is to say, institutional discourse is largely typified by its instrumentality or goal-orientedness (Drew and Heritage 1992, Drew and Sorjonen 1997), pertaining to the accomplishment of tasks which are relevant to the institutional project. Instrumentality is further embodied in the roles of the participants, incorporating relative status orientations, as these are played out by the participants as "functions to be performed" (Janney and Arndt 1998: 791). Institutional discourse can therefore be defined as "talk which sets up positions for people to talk from and restricts some speakers' access to certain kinds of discursive actions" (Thornborrow 2002: 4). As institutional discourse is role-structured, differential rights and responsibilities are pre-allocated. Institutional asymmetry is consequently manifest in the turn-taking procedures of interaction, including turn types such as question-answer sequences (Drew and Heritage 1992, Drew and Sorjonen 1997, Sarangi 1998, Thornborrow 2002).

Such asymmetry may often be apparent in pedagogic discourse, particularly during the plenary stages of instruction: that is, teacher-fronted interaction shaped by the elicitation and display of target information, during which the teacher may maintain overt control of both topic management and turn-taking procedures (Edwards and Westgate 1994, McHoul 1978). This type of pedagogy in action may often take the well documented form of triadic IRF patterning (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975), through which the students' 'allowable contributions' (Levinson 1979) are largely restricted to the middle response slot (van Lier 2001). Feedback in the form of evaluation, which may be

deemed "socially hazardous" (Schneider 1988: 176) in conversation among adults, is likely to represent a third-part norm in the scripted sequences of classroom interaction. Moreover, it may be through the ritualized practice of asymmetry, which therefore deviates from the normative symmetry of conversation, that the teacher expresses him- or herself *as* teacher. In other words, "teachers 'do' being teachers by exercising privileged rights to nominate conversational topics, and by deciding which learners may talk when" (Markee 2005: 197).

As Seedhouse (2004) points out, however, it is the goal-orientedness of the pedagogic focus which largely provides interaction with its greater or lesser constraints. In spoken 'on-task' interaction with the students, the teacher's role in part embodies such instrumentalities, which are likely to diverge along with the relevant pedagogic focus. The teacher may further choose to personalize the topic through 'self-revelation' (Richards 2006), thereby downplaying status differentials. Nevertheless, it is questionable to what extent institutional hierarchies might be entirely negated (Wilson 1989). Furthermore, this would appear to represent a largely voluntary relational engagement on the part of the teacher.

The concept of classroom conversation is not therefore inherently contradictory (cf. Richards 2006); nor is it made on institutional demand, however. In the case of conversation-for-learning, on the other hand, conversation is institutionally staged 'for' the acquisitional benefit of the L2 learner. As such, the teacher is to some extent pre-positioned *as* a teacher vis-à-vis the student-participants *for* whom he or she is engaging in conversation. This raises the question of how the teachers might define themselves in so-called 'free conversation' which is institutionally staged. The institutionalization of conversation may further throw a spanner in the works of normativity, causing our selves to be re-made to a heightened degree of reflexivity. At the conceptual level, it would appear that conversation-for-learning fuses the relationality of conversation with the

instrumentality of pedagogy, thereby conflating the person of inter-personal talk with the role-based persona of institutional discourse.

3. METHODOLOGY AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORKS

The research concerns itself with "problematizing givens" (Pennycook 2001: 7), as it questions the assumption that free conversation can be 'made' between unacquainted teachers and students in the institutionalized practice of conversation-for-learning. Situated in a socio-cultural milieu of language teaching in which "ideas of authenticity are central to the way that English is sold to society" (Seargeant 2005: 326), the research further problematizes the native speaking teacher as 'authentic' communicator. The focal research questions can accordingly be formulated as follows:

- In what ways do relationality and institutionality conflict in conversation-for-learning in the current context of research?

- How is this manifest in particular relation to English only and topic pre-selection by the students?

- How are emergent tensions resolved by the teacher in interaction?

- In what way do these impact on teacher self-definition in the supposedly conversational event, e.g. to what extent do they play 'themselves', or a non-institutionally defined self, and to what extent do they play 'the teacher', or a role-based persona, in the institutionalized practice of conversation?

- What are the cultural implications of the teacher as foreigner in English conversation practice?

- In what way is the issue of teacher authenticity of self of relevance to conversation-for-learning, as an interpersonal and intercultural event which is institutionally staged?

With regard to such anticipated problematics of self definition, the research was designed to generate data by staging conversation-for-learning between students and teachers in the pre-existing institutional confines of the conversation lounge. In explaining my own role in the set-up of the relevant conversation task, the generation of ethnographic data, and the subsequent analysis of both, I locate myself and the research within a progressive qualitative research paradigm, in which the object of enquiry is taken to represent both a construction by the participants and an interpretative process with which the researcher is herself reflexively engaged (see Holliday 2002).

The research took place in the English Language Unit (ELU) of a private Japanese university which specializes in the teaching of foreign languages, linguistics and intercultural studies, and whose self-stated mission is to educate internationally-minded students by supporting the development of skills in intercultural communication along with a cross-cultural awareness of diversity. The ELU teachers were all on fixed-term, non-renewable lecturing contracts of three years, having previously completed Masters degrees in TESOL, or a related field, such as Applied Linguistics or Communication. The students who participated in the research were all Japanese nationals who were studying English as their major at the university. The research comprised the following participants and methods:

26 audio-recorded 'conversations' between 26 teachers and 51 students

(duration = c. 7hrs 30 mins in total, with interaction ranging from c. 10 mins to c. 30 mins)

25 audio-recorded interviews with teachers who participated in the 'conversations'

(duration = c. 40-70 mins)

13 audio-recorded focus group discussions among 53 student-participants

(duration of focus groups = c. 35-70 mins)

Initially, the procedure involved assigning pairs of students to approach a teacher on duty in the conversation lounge (with whom they were in all but two cases unacquainted), requesting to record a 10-15 minute conversation. This represented a non-assessed task, which was scheduled during the students' free periods, while integrated with their sophomore Oral Communication syllabus. The conversations are not, then, what might ordinarily be presented as naturalistically occurring. However, as "elicited discourse" (Kasper 2004: 554), conversation-for-learning might by definition include an element of stagedness, contingent on the very nature of its institutional design.

Following the 'conversational' events, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with the teacher-participants, in which they were presented with simplified transcripts of their recorded interaction and asked to discuss their views of this in relation to the context of interaction. The interview schedule was designed so that the focus would gradually shift from more general impressions of the interaction, to accounts of teacher-student relations, to perceived constraints and issues of impression management, and finally to perceptions of wider institutional and cultural norms. The interviews were not intended to be retrospective, but reflexively introspective. In other words, they were not considered to be retrospective accounts of what the teachers supposedly

remembered themselves doing and of why they did it, but were taken as ethnographic renditions of the transcribed interaction and its socio-culturally situated context.

The transcripts also served as a reflexive stimulus in focus group discussions which were subsequently held among the student-participants. This represented a more innovative research design, as the role of the moderator was replaced with card prompts, serving to guide the students through their self-directed discussions without inhibiting their responses (at least not beyond the propositional constraints of the questions themselves). These were similar in design to those of the teachers' interviews, in aiming to elucidate the participants' interpretations of the transcribed interaction. However, as can be seen, the research methods employed to this end differed quite considerably in their means. This was due to the different institutional relationship obtaining between myself and the teachers on the one hand, and myself and the students on the other. As the focus of research lay primarily with the teachers, moreover, they were individualized in research, while the students were methodologically collectivized as a 'body'.

In the latter half of the methodology chapter, I discuss my approach to discourse analysis. This first involves critically examining the interrelationship between language, context and agency, and my own positioning as researcher within that nexus. In keeping with current poststructuralist trends, as discussed by Block (2007), the self is defined as reflexively constituted through the interaction of (institutional) structure and (personal) agency, whereby language represents both a creative and dynamically perpetuating force. As my discourse analysis takes a pre-existing structure into account, most notably in the form of the English-only policy and official recommendation that students pre-select topic, it primarily borrows its tools from linguistic and sociological disciplines, such as interactional sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and conversation analysis. Such an eclectic approach allows for various linguistic, contextual and sequential properties of talk to be

foregrounded in analysis. However, an overriding focus on framing was thought to lend itself particularly well to the research data, given the tension between institutionality and relationality discussed in the conceptual overview chapter.

As mentioned previously, the research also includes ethnographic data derived from participant interviews and focus group discussions, which are intended to 'open linguistics up' (cf. Rampton 2007: 596). In the data chapters of the thesis, I attempt to segment the different levels of interpretative analysis by firstly presenting the discourse data and their analysis, followed by interview data related to the given discourse segments, and lastly, critically examining additional data from interview and focus group discussions pertaining to the emergent themes. Finally, the methodology chapter concludes by considering fundamental methodological concerns of data selection and its representation through the practice of transcription.

DATA CHAPTERS

4. ENGLISH ONLY AND THE PROSCRIBED USE OF JAPANESE

The empirical section of the thesis begins with an analysis of teacher self definition in relation to the English-only policy of the lounge and the implicitly proscribed use of Japanese, through which the concept of the native speaker as monolingual archetype is examined. It presents us with an initial insight into the way in which institutional and interpersonal goals can create tensions which are resolved by the teacher at the level of self construction, as it draws a contrastive analysis between two widely diverging approaches to the English-only policy by the teachers in interaction. The way in which the identities of novice and expert are invoked by the participants in relation to the prohibited use of Japanese represents the focal point of analysis. Further drawing on participants'

ethnographically reported use of Japanese elsewhere in the university provides a more encompassing frame within which to critically examine a potential conflict of self definition in the English-only confines of the lounge. It is argued that, in the pretence of English only, teacher-student dialogue may present a form of orchestrated monolingual 'authenticity', which is divorced from the real-life 'native speaker' as foreign resident in Japan. As such, the institutionally adapted conversational persona of the on-duty teacher may differ from his or her real-life interactional self, in terms of existing knowledge states and associated experiences. It thus invokes a personification of the abstract construct of the native speaker, which may well have its uses as myth and model in pedagogic description and prescription, yet remains problematic in the flesh (Davies 2003).

5. MOBILIZING THE MEDIUM: TOPIC AS A FRAME FOR CONVERSATION-FOR-LEARNING

The negotiation of topic is analyzed in the second data chapter in view of the institutional recommendation that students select a topic prior to approaching a teacher on duty in the lounge. This is of relevance to the institutional roles and conversational selves of the participants, as the pre-allocation of topic nomination itself conflicts with the local contingency of conversational organization. In short, it represents an inversion of an assumed institutional asymmetry, in which the teacher ordinarily nominates the topic of interaction. This is seen to present an inherent contradiction, however, as the pre-determination of topic is itself characteristic of institutional discourse (Marková and Foppa 1991).

The chapter presents a four-part cline of data segments which illustrate varying degrees of responsibility for topic nomination assumed by the students in interaction. The analysis shows that as the students introduce the topic, it serves as both a means of making and framing talk. In other words, topic serves as the requisite 'something to talk about', yet in its explicit formulation also plays a quasi-instrumental role as '*the* reason for talk', e.g. as in the case of the student's nomination of topic as 'today we are going to talk about sports'. The focus on information exchange conflicts with the supposedly relational underpinnings of phatic communion. In addition, a tendency for the interaction to take on the characteristics of an interview was noted both in the analysis of the discourse excerpts and the participants' ethnographic accounts, with the students asking other-oriented questions to the teachers. Such other-orientation may be the norm in first-time conversational encounters, as the participants typically ask each other questions in the self-presentational phases of interaction (Svennevig 1999). However, the conversational convention of reciprocity may here be undermined by the students' pre-selection of topic, coupled with its instrumental framing, as this can appear to 'set' the topic as the agenda of interaction in the institutionalized practice of conversation making. This is further compounded by the potential difficulty on the part of the student of providing an extended comment in the third position, following a question-answer adjacency pair, in the flux of L2 interaction (cf. Mori 2002). Such one-sidedness in interviewing presents a stumbling block to both the construction of conversational symmetry and the process of topic chaining which underpins the stepwise progression of topic.

6. CULTURE AS CATEGORIZATION, DISPLAY AND EXPERTISE

The final data chapter combines elements of the initial focus of language, culture and self (in Chapter 4) with the subsequent exploration of topic nomination, framing and interactional trajectory (in Chapter 5), as it considers the impact on 'conversation' of the teacher's place of origin as the most commonly selected topic by the students. Three such examples are examined in relation to initial presentational sequences which categorize the teachers by place of origin, one of which is pursued at length, as it charts the topic through the course of its interactional trajectory.

The analysis reveals that in conversational other-orientation to the personal indexical of nationality, the students commonly frame the exchange as a 'wanting to know' endeavour on their part, whereby the teacher is positioned as both expert and provider of cultural information. Expertise is defined in the research as a 'special' knowledge which a participant might either claim or be granted ownership of on the basis of personalized experience, or his or her assumed membership of a cultural community of relevance to the topic. As the 'authentic' foreign native, the teacher might be expected to claim, or be granted, cultural ownership of the given topic (cf. Mori 2003).

Attempts by the teachers to counterbalance the disparity in knowledge by first eliciting contributions from the students are shown to paradoxically reinforce the teachers' own expertise. Such elicitation framework is reminiscent of classroom discourse, as it evokes minimal responses from the students, followed by third turn assessments by the teachers. Although these also serve as continuers, which prompt the students to make further contributions to the exchange, they at the same time inhibit stepwise topic progression.

Much rather, the participants throw together a bricolage of disconnected cultural tokens to picture postcard effect. In the lack of any personal common ground, the participants must seek to establish communal common ground in interaction. However, in the case of the teacher's nationality, it is a category of cultural membership to which the students do not themselves belong; and the topic is thus shaped by 'outside information' (Clark 1996), 'recipient designed' (Schegloff 1980) for the student. It is argued that this results in a form of cross-cultural reduction, compounded by the didactic footing assumed by the teacher in seeking to elicit contributions from the students.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The concluding chapter pulls together the focal threads of analysis of the empirical chapters, namely, self, topic and expertise, as it re-considers the thorny issue of 'authenticity' in relation to teacher identity, cultural representation and the very practice of institutionalized conversation making. It thereby reiterates the institutional processes and elements which may inhibit the forging of equitable relations and construction of symmetry in conversation-for-learning among unacquainted teachers and students. Suggestions are put forward to potentially alleviate some of the tensions between institutionality and relationality, which are embodied within the interactionally emergent selves and roles of the teacher-participants.

To review and extend some of the problematics uncovered, it is necessary to reiterate that the presentational phases of first-time conversational encounters are typically characterized by the relational element of reciprocity, through which the participants are impelled to contribute personal information to the exchange. Doing so may enable them to unearth areas

of common ground and interest which sustain the conversation in an ongoing process of topic-chaining; for instance, they might establish co-membership in the same sub-cultural community, as fans of rock music, or dedicated tennis players, etc. However, the present conversation-for-learning data point to an initial lack of reciprocated questions on the part of the teacher, following the quasi-instrumental framing of the pre-selected topic by the student. For this reason it may be difficult for the students to contribute personal information and experiences to the conversation, as their topical initiatives are often succeeded by a concatenation of questions to the teacher. Moreover, any self-oriented comments would ordinarily need to be occasioned by the preceding discourse (Svennevig 1999). In the common case that the students question the teacher on a topic with which they are themselves largely unfamiliar, it may consequently be difficult for them to contribute at all, let alone personalize their contributions in a manner conducive towards the interrelational sharing of experience, given the highly differentiated distribution of knowledge underpinning the 'conversation'. Elicitation attempts by the teachers may, on the other hand, be counterproductive, in evoking a classroom mode of discourse.

Returning to a key point of the conceptual overview chapter, the attributes of self-definition in the presentational phases of conversation readily slot into pre-formulated social-ontological schemes which can be easily apprehended by one's interlocutors in first-time encounters, as we initially seek to 'type' one another, e.g. by job or place of origin (Maynard and Zimmerman 1984, Svennevig 1999). The presented self thus embodies core identifying characteristics which are by social necessity somewhat essentialized in design. A one-sided failure to move beyond an initial categorization of the teacher as foreigner in the interviewing phase of first-time conversations may therefore run the risk of essentialization, due to the reductive showcasing of differential cultural membership. Moreover, in the

context of English language teaching in Japan, the teacher plays an institutional role as an 'authentic' foreign native, and categorization by place of origin might not represent the best personal attribute to serve in the process of conversationalization through 'self'-revelation. This fusion of institutional role and conversational self is compounded by the difficulty of defining culture and what it is taken to comprise more generally within the field of foreign language teaching (Byram 1989, Byram and Grundy 2003). In other words, how might the teachers fashion themselves as cultural products in interaction with the students?

Although the thesis suggests ways of mitigating potentially conflicting elements of institutionality in conversation-for-learning, its main contribution arguably lies in the project of problematization itself. As a language teaching practice, conversation-for-learning is entwined in a communicative ideology which enshrines the myth of the 'native speaker' (Davies 2003, Mey 1981). It might often be unquestioningly assumed to promote the learners' acquisition of the target language, in representing 'authentic' conversation with an 'authentic' native speaker. However, the thesis uncovers embodied tensions in the interactional role of the teacher, whose apparent authenticity is institutionally crafted to a heightened degree of self-reflexivity, itself at odds with conversational normativity.

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