

BOOK WATCH

Talk-in-interaction: Multilingual perspectives.

Nguyen, H. t., & Kasper, G. (Eds.). 2009. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i at Manoa, National Foreign Language Resource Center.

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This edited volume “offers original studies of interaction in a range of languages and language varieties, including Chinese, English, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Swahili, Thai, and Vietnamese; monolingual and bilingual interactions, and activities designed for second or foreign language learning. Conducted from the perspectives of conversation analysis and membership categorization analysis, the chapters examine ordinary conversation and institutional activities in face-to-face, telephone, and computer-mediated environments.” Five of the chapters have Japanese contexts. Two of these chapters will be briefly summarized here. The research methodology used in both studies was conversation analysis (CA).

In Chapter 6, Scott Saft describes tactics that participants in university faculty meetings in Japan used in a data sample to avoid and terminate arguments, particularly how the linguistic item *maa* was used “to move the talk away from the expression of opposition.” Furthermore, the data analysis examines how the use of *maa* in this way, i.e., to avoid or terminate arguments, allowed participants to stay focused on the work of the meeting and, therefore to meet their institutional obligations as faculty members. *Maa*-prefaced utterances allowed speakers to both rebut and to terminate expressions of opposition so as to move the talk back to the matter at hand, thus serving “the faculty members as important resources for accomplishing their jobs.”

In Chapter 9, Eric Hauser examines locally-managed and “party-administered” turn-taking (Sachs, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974) in two classroom discussions carried out by a group of four Japanese learners of English in a university setting. The administration of turn-taking was decided by the discussion participants during the construction of the discussion. “...the student participants construct an intersubjective understanding of the nature of the classroom task that they have been assigned and display an orientation to the institutional context.” The turn-taking seemed to form a pattern of a primary speaker taking a turn in asking the task question and giving her/his opinion without the other students attempting to take a substantial turn themselves but instead waiting for their own turn to do the assigned task. This pattern was the result of not only “the actions of the primary speaker but of the orientations and actions of all four participants” in the institutional context of the classroom. The research data analysis and discussion presented here could contribute to enlightening non-Japanese EFL teachers in Japan to some of the patterns in which our students organize themselves to carry out classroom tasks.

References

Sacks, H., Schegloff, E. A., & Jefferson, G. 1974. A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. *Language*, 50, 696-735.

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