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On the Development of L2 Interactional Competence in Online Spoken Communication

My talk focuses on how L2 learners and speakers manage talk, accomplish social actions and pedagogical tasks, and maintain intersubjectivity in video-conference communication, using online platforms. More specifically, the study explores ways L2 learners respond, verbally and nonverbally, to their co-participants while engaged in informal pedagogical activities. The aim of the study is to gain a deeper understanding of the development of L2 interactional competence by focusing on a detailed description of how L2 speakers mobilize various channels of modality (such as talk, gaze, prosody, gesture, and body posture) systematically to constitute and coordinate a coherent course of action.

Research on language and social interaction has shown that “listeners” in a conversation are indeed active co-participants who shape the ongoing conversation and create intersubjectivity by their facial expressions, gestures, body postures and vocalizations (Ford and Fox, 1996; Goodwin, 1979). Through verbal and nonverbal response behaviors, co-participants indicate their understanding of talk, signal their problems with talk, express agreement or disagreement, and show their affective and epistemic stance (Gardner, 1998, 2001; Goodwin, 1986; Heritage, 2013; Schegloff, 1982). For instance, in situations in which a speaker underestimates the knowledge state of their co-participant (i.e., when they provide too much information), the co-participant can confirm the prior talk with the token *das stimmt* (that’s right). In contrast to a *ja* (yes), which merely acknowledges the prior talk (Golato and Fagyal, 2008), *das stimmt* is always used by co-participants to indicate that they have independent knowledge of what the prior speaker said (Betz, 2015). Or, by using the response token *genau* (exactly), German speakers confirm their co-participant’s prior talk (turn) and align with the (epistemic) stance conveyed in their co-participant’s talk (Betz, 2012; Betz, E., Taleghani-Nikazm, C, Drake, V, Golato, A., 2013). These are just a few examples from recent empirical research on German response tokens in everyday conversation from an interactionist-perspective that show the essential role these little words play in everyday interaction.

Formulating response turns and using response tokens appropriately in everyday L2 conversation are crucial interactional competences (He and Young, 1998; Kasper, 2006; Young, 2008; Taleghani-Nikazm, 2015). While adult L2 learners acquire response tokens in their L1 and can transfer co-participant behavior into their L2, response tokens and their placement in the L2 may express different things depending on position and intonation (e.g., Clancy, Thompson, Suzuki, and Tao, 1996; Gardner, 2001). Therefore, when engaged in a conversation, the L2 co-participant’s choice of response tokens and formulation of responsive-turn may have interactional consequences. However, there are very few empirical studies that examine the details of L2 learners’ responsive behavior over a period of time. The majority have focused on English speakers learning Japanese (e.g., Ishida, 2009, 2010; Masuda, 2011; Ohta, 1999, 2001). No previous research has focused on the L2 development of German

responsive behavior from an interactionist-perspective. This paper offers a conversation analytic examination of German L2 learners' responsive behavior when engaged in conversations with each other outside of the classroom over a semester-long German course in intermediate and low-advanced levels.