LOOKING FOR PATTERNS OR FOR VARIETY?

USING RESEARCH DATA TO TRAIN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND STAFF FOR INTERCULTURAL CLASSROOM ENCOUNTERS

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1. The research context

- ‘ESCALATE’ (Hyland et al. 2008)
  - Inquiry into the internationalisation experiences of staff and students in higher education
  - Students: problems in forming relationships beyond co-national peers
  - Staff: problems developing effective teaching and classroom management techniques
  - Recommendation: to make further inquiries into students’ learning experiences and the development of support structures for staff

  - Cultural scripts for learning
    - Activities for learning: talk for learning, writing in learning, reading and learning
    - Relationships for learning: participation in sessions, teacher’s role and status, peer interaction
1. The research context

  
  “There has been a disregard of interpersonal or social as opposed to formal aspects of academic talk. Particularly the relational side of academic talk in face-to-face interactions between teachers and students is regarded as a prospective research topic in academic (and educational) institutions because of its socializing potential for students. [...]”
2. The project

2.1 Project aims

To explore issues regarding the management of relationships in culturally diverse university classrooms

- Tutor’s and students’ expectations regarding the management of relationships
- Extent to which these expectations are guided by orientation to cultural and other frameworks
- The management of these expectations in classroom interaction
- Students’ and tutors’ perceptions of ‘intercultural’ classroom encounters

To explore issues regarding research design, data analysis and the adaptability of research data for training purposes
2. The project

- 2.2 Data collection
  - Pilot study, Spring 2010
    - Video-recording and transcription of three HE classes
      - Level 1 Accounting Tutorial
      - Oral Skills class (part of the English Language Support programme)
      - MA Research Methods class (PG Translation)
    - Follow-up interviews with class tutor and 1-2 students per class
    - Student records of rapport-sensitive incidents (see Spencer-Oatey 2002)
      - Low return rate
2. The project

2.3 Theoretical framework

Spencer-Oatey (2000): Rapport management

- Quality face
  - Personal self-esteem

- Identity face
  - Public worth

- Equity rights
  - Cost-benefit
  - Autonomy-imposition

- Association rights
  - Interactional association-disassociation
  - Affective association-disassociation
2. The project

2.3 Theoretical framework

- Contextualisation cues: “As metapragmatic signs, contextualization cues represent speakers’ ways of signalling and providing information to interlocutors and audiences about how language is being used at any one point in the ongoing stream of talk.” (Gumperz 1999, p. 454)

- In intercultural encounters, participants may not share the same contextualisation cues and interpretative schemata
3. Results and Discussion

“Their signalling value depends on the participants’ awareness of their meaningfulness. When all participants understand and notice the relevant cues, interpretive processes are then taken for granted and tend to go unnoticed. However, when a listener does not react to a cue or is unaware of its function, interpretations may differ and misunderstanding may occur. It is important to note that when this happens and when a difference in interpretation is brought to a participant’s attention, it tends to be seen in attitudinal terms. A speaker is said to be unfriendly, impertinent, rude, uncooperative, or to fail to understand (Gumperz 1982, p. 132).”

Example 1/2
3. Results and Discussion

- “In communication research generally, there seems to be some agreement among researchers that it is through the study of communicative breakdown that we understand how successful communication happens. [...] It is through the occurrence of miscommunication that cultural differences become real and take on a life of their own. This leads to what I call ‘analytical stereotyping’ of intercultural events. Analysts operate with a prior definition of the situation and its participants as (inter)cultural and subsequently play upon a principle of cultural differences in accounting for instances of miscommunication.” (Sarangi 2004, p. 413)

Example 3
“Relational work looks at all forms of verbal interaction in their own right. If the researcher is interested in the “polite” level of relational work, the focus should be on the discursive struggle over what is considered appropriate / politic behaviour. This will automatically include the discursive struggle over what is deemed by individuals to be polite. While we have repeatedly stressed that no utterance is inherently polite, we do claim that individuals evaluate certain utterances as polite against the background of their own habitus, or, to put it in another way, against the structures of expectation evoked within the frame of the interaction.” (Locher & Watts 2007, p. 29)
4. Training for intercultural encounters

Cortazzi & Lin (1997, p. 77)
4. Training for intercultural encounters

- Interactional Sociolinguistics vs. Conversation Analysis
  - Conversation analysis:
    - Description of the orderliness, and sequential structures of interaction ➔ patterns
    - evidence from outside the talk not usually considered
  - Interactional Sociolinguistics
    - Description of differences in language use
    - correlated with non-linguistic differences ➔ variety
4. Training for intercultural encounters

“The great advantage of using an action learning approach which we observed as facilitators is its potential to alert practitioners to the complex and specific contextual factors which are crucial in accounting for the dynamics of interaction. Developing the ability to observe, analyse and reflect on the communicative challenges in one’s own particular work environment, and then to initiate cycles of change, is empowering for the individual and provides a pathway to developing a learning organisation.” (Jones & Stubbe 2004, p. 204)
References


