

“I don’t know how to say it”
THE ROLE OF MULTIMODAL RESOURCES
IN MEANING NEGOTIATION



Asst. Prof. Dr. Nur Nabilah Abdullah

Kulliyyah of Languages and Management
International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)
EduHub, Pagoh Muar
Johor, Malaysia

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Introduction

Multimodality

- ▶ inter-disciplinary approach that recognises **communication and representation** as **more than just language**.
- ▶ **Resources**- gaze, gestures, body postures, surrounding, material objects
- ▶ People use multiple means of **meaning making** (Jewitt, Bezemer, & O'Halloran, 2016)

Introduction

Multimodality and Conversation Analysis

- ▶ people ‘**build action**’ using **various multimodal resources** (Mortensen, 2012; Mondada, 2019)
- ▶ ‘action’ may be realised by spoken utterance, gestures, gaze, body postures, body movements, prosody, and/or shift in gaze
- ▶ **using video recordings** in CA research
- ▶ opportunities to explore the **interplay between verbal and nonverbal in interaction** (Streeck et al., 2011; Mortensen, 2012; Mondada, 2019)

How did I
arrive to
this topic?



The Study

- ▶ Wagner & Firth (1997) **interactional perspective**
- ▶ investigating interaction in a **natural setting**,
- ▶ analysing elements of **meaning-making, meaning negotiation process**
- ▶ Many L2 studies in an educational context
- ▶ Necessary to **understand L2 multilingual interaction outside of the educational context**
(Canagarajah & Wurr, 2011)

Study Focus

- ▶ Focuses **not only on spoken language**
- ▶ Various **multimodal resources** in multilingual interaction
- ▶ Instances of multilingual speakers having **interactional difficulties** (**word searches**)
- ▶ Interplay of the use of language, gaze, hand gestures in **meaning negotiation process**
- ▶ Reaching **understanding**

Word Searches

- ▶ When a speaker pauses in the middle of a turn to search for the next item due
- ▶ Speakers may display difficulty in their utterances by using sound stretches/elongation and vocal perturbations
- ▶ physical conduct (gaze away/ scratch head, etc.)
- ▶ self-addressed questions (*Whatchacallit*)



Research questions



How do multilingual speakers deal with interactional difficulties and achieve understanding?



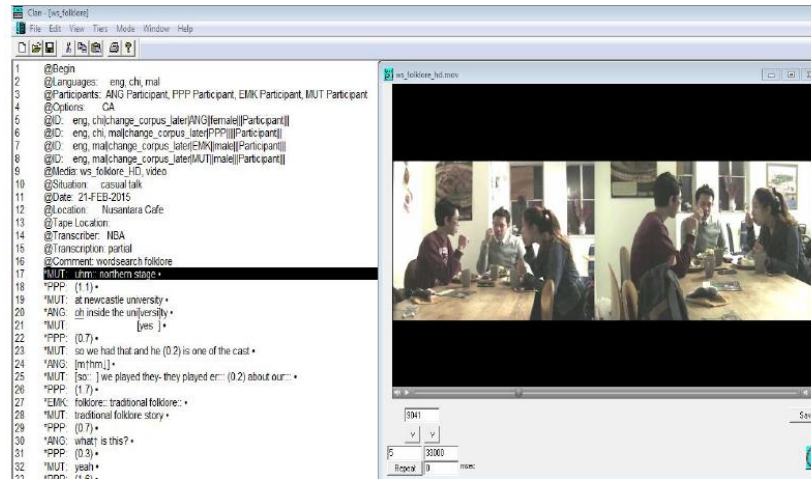
Methodology

- ❖ Use multimodal Conversation Analysis (CA)
- ❖ to examine the dynamic coordination of interactional resources

Data

- ❖ Video data collection – total 8 hours
- ❖ International university students
- ❖ who do not share the same L1
- ❖ Identified 44 word search sequences

Data transcription



- ❖ Video recordings were watched and listened to numerous times
- ❖ Transcribed using CLAN software
- ❖ using CA transcription conventions (Jefferson, 2004)
- ❖ annotated multimodally (see Sert, 2017).

Video extract:



Analysis & Findings

Ann displays **interactional trouble** –
word searching begins

```
1  ANN:  I think semi- I think they give-
2  LEA:  like-
3        (0.3)
      +ANN raises her hands upwards
4  ANN:  single:: the::(0.4)°>kind of known as<° semi:: †
      +LEA moves hand upwards & downwards (Fig 1)
      +MUS gazes at LEA's hand gestures (Fig 1)
      +ANN moves hand gestures downwards & upwards. (Fig 1)
5        (0.4)
      +ANN keeps hand gestures upwards
```



Lea joins in the search activity –
meaning negotiation begins

Analysis & Findings

6 MUS: mm:
+MUS frowns while gazes at ANN

7 ANN: be:d? >I don't know< how to say it (.) like-
+ANN shifts gazes towards MUS

8 LEA: be:ds
+LEA gazes at ANN (Fig 2)

9 (0.4)
+LEA moves her hands upwards & downwards (Fig 2)

Ann explicitly displays trouble



Meaning negotiation process –
Lea makes an attempt to provide a solution to the word search-embodied completion (Osher, 2004)

Analysis & Findings

10 ANN: yah [like- like-

11 LEA: [ya:h ya:h

Shared understanding

12 (0.2)

13 LEA: they have two like- (.) two levels

+LEA makes finger gestures (Fig 3)

+ANN makes hand gestures (Fig 3)

+ANN and MUS gaze at each other (Fig 3)

14 ANN: like two levels

+ANN and LEA continues with their hand gestures

15 : (0.5)

+MUS nods head



meaning negotiation
process



Analysis & Findings

16 MUS: mm:: (0.3) oka:y
+MUS keeps nodding head

Ann explicitly seeks help
from Mus

17 ANN: what is it ca:ll↑ (0.2) se- call semi:: ↑ °be:d°
+Both ANN and MUS gaze at each other

18 MUS: er:: (.) [double decke:r?

Candidate word

19 ANN: [forgo:t

20 (0.2)

21 ANN: a double decke:r maybe

22 MUS: maybe

Checking understanding

23 MUS: [°haha°]

24 ANN: [maybe] I think it's double decker

25 MUS: ↑mm ↓hm
+MUS nods head

Reach an understanding

DISCUSSION

- Interaction process is not limited to verbal language
- interlocutors appears to observe their interlocutors' responses
- how they describe and represent multimodal resources
- relevant in the attempt to negotiate meaning for a possible candidate word





Summary

- interlocutors use multimodal resources to construct a **joint solution in the meaning negotiation process** (Matsumoto & Canagarajah, 2020)
- Broaden our understanding to view multilingual speakers as “**creative language users**” (Firth & Wagner, 1997; Firth, 2007)
- **Interplay of language, gaze, and gestures in meaning negotiation and mutual understanding**



Conclusion

- Interactional perspective – multimodal CA in multicultural setting
- Relevance in understanding how language and communication work in multicultural interaction
- **joint construction of meaning** in interactions among **multilingual participants** (Canagarajah & Wurr, 2011)
- Meaning-making, **meaning negotiation** are fundamentally **multimodal** (Streeck et al., 2011; Mondada, 2016)



Thank you

Nur Nabilah Abdullah
nnabilah@iiium.edu.my