

A Chorus Line: Engaging (or Not) with the Open Floor

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ABSTRACT: Turn-taking in classrooms has long been a topic of interest to discourse analysts, with attention paid to turn allocation in teacher-fronted settings (McHoul, 1978; Mehan, 1979), and recent research identifying teacher practices for managing "competing voices" (Waring, 2013). This study builds on such work, asking how students engage with an open floor in "materials mode" (Walsh, 2006, 2011), where teacher and students are focused on a written text and students respond in apparent chorus. We are interested in looking at students who actively bid for turns as well as those who do not contribute verbally. Based on videotaped data from an English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom and from a college reading class (both in the United States), this multimodal conversation analytic study (Mondada, 2016) identifies relevant interactional resources and practices, including talk, gaze, body position, gesture, and the physical environment. Findings suggest that 1) these apparently mundane interactions are a site for complex actions on the parts of individual students, and 2) the focus on text materials in these exchanges has consequences for participation, including temporality, sequentiality, and turn-taking. Pedagogical implications include problematizing motivations and objectives for a common classroom ritual.

Keywords: multimodality, conversation analysis, choral response

1. INTRODUCTION

We started this research by looking at apparently uneventful classroom moments where the teacher is reading questions from a text, and students choose from a limited set of potential answers, a type of interaction Walsh (2011) calls "materials mode," (p.116). Our focus is on exchanges where the interaction consists of a string of Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) sequences (Mehan, 1979), each starting with a display question based on a text. Because we are interested in student actions, we concentrate on cases where the teacher creates an open floor, thus leaving room for a variety of student responses. We choose such episodes *because they are mundane*; they seem to epitomize the kind of teacher/student interaction we, as analysts, are most likely to ignore or gloss over, in favor of more apparently interesting episodes where teacher and students move away from the ritual of IRF (Gourlay, 2005; Waring, 2009). Our question is how students engage (or not) with such sequences, and we use conversation analysis (CA), with its careful attention to the sequentiality and temporality of social action, to elucidate these episodes.

Below, we offer a brief review of relevant literature. We then consider four sequences in detail. In the discussion section, we look closely at student actions, including verbal turns and multimodal actions such as gaze and writing. We also discuss the process of transcribing and analyzing these whole-class interactions, suggesting that some difficulties faced by researchers may relate to potential pedagogical issues with these sequences.

1.1 Statement of the problem

A common feature of classroom discourse transcripts, including those following CA methodology, is to represent a choral response, or multiple students saying 'the same thing' at

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the same time, with just one line of the transcript, marked by either "LL," i.e., learners, or "Ss" i.e., students (see Dobs, 2014 for an exception). Lerner (2002) describes the complex deployment of choral responses in everyday conversation, but in classroom transcriptions, also uses "Class" to refer to multiple students speaking at once. Indeed, in our initial verbatim transcriptions of these episodes, we likewise marked such choral responses as "Ss." However, our analysis led us to problematize this practice, as we realized the complexity of multimodal actions represented by the "Ss" line. We began this research, then, with an interest in the complexity of choral responses; however, we soon found that we needed to broaden our view. Thus, this article examines multimodal actions and turn-taking more generally in open-floor, materials mode sequences. Excerpt 1 is an example of one such episode presented in the purposefully simplified transcription style described above. A more complex transcription of this interaction can be found in Excerpt 1a, below.

(1) Vocabulary review – Utopia (simplified transcript)

1	TEA	Alright. So down below, just you can call them out here,
2		an ideal or perfect place- (0.2) or state?
3	S	Utopia.
4	T	U[topia?]
5	Ss	[Utopia.]
6	TEA	Noisy and disorderly? Or boisterous?
7	Ss	Raucous.
8	TEA	Raucous? Okay? A source of help, a strength,
9		something to turn to, an option"?
10	Ss	Recourse.

This excerpt, like all of the interactions discussed here, starts with a reference to the text. In this case, the teacher says “down below” (line 1) referring to a list of words and definitions in students' vocabulary workbooks. We then see a series of IRF sequences. Here, the teacher initiates by reading a definition (lines 1-2, 6, & 8-9) and students respond (either individually or in concert), by saying a single word (lines 3, 5, 7, & 10). The teacher offers feedback via repetition (lines 4, 8). This sequence does not include any diverging student answers, questions about the material, or teacher follow-up questions. While such expanded interactions occur in the data from which these excerpts are gathered, they are not our focus here.

1.2 Participation in the classroom

In classroom discourse research, the term "participation structure" has generally been used to refer to the rights and obligations of speakers in interaction (van Lier, 1988; Waring, 2009). Participation is also colloquially regarded as speaking (e.g., many syllabi count "participation" towards students' grades, generally considered to be their willingness to contribute to class discussions). van Lier (1988) notes the need for a clearer definition of participation, arguing that if we are interested in actions in the classroom, we must pay attention to more than what is said. Goffman (1981) offers an understanding of participation as a constantly shifting phenomenon which may be revealed multimodally (cf. Box, 2011; Goodwin, 1999, 2000; 2007; Wells, 2000). Drawing on Goffman, Schwab (2011) introduces the term “multilogue” as a more accurate descriptor of whole-class interaction than dialogue. Schwab argues that in these settings, all members of the class *potentially* have access to contributions and could contribute themselves. In this paper, while we focus on multimodal actions in the classroom, we are agnostic about whether all such actions can be deemed *participation*, particularly when it is not clear whether the participants themselves orient to them as such. We will explore this question in more detail below.

1.2.1 Three-part sequences

A basic interactional structure in the classroom is a teacher-initiated three-part sequence - the IRF (cf. McHoul, 1985; Mehan, 1979; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). The first move is a teacher initiation, followed by a student response, and finally by a third teacher turn, usually providing feedback or an evaluation. From a CA perspective, McHoul (1978) argues that the pre-allocation of turns results in the teacher holding every other turn, a finding echoed by Sahlström (2002). While the IRF has been criticized as unduly restrictive and limiting of opportunities for student participation, Seedhouse (2004) argues that the context in which the sequence occurs must be considered to evaluate its pedagogical effectiveness. Indeed, as Wells (1993) writes, "the same basic discourse format can lead to different levels of student participation and engagement" (p. 3). That is, this common form of classroom discourse can serve a variety of interactional and pedagogical purposes. One such purpose is to make knowledge "publicly available" (Hall, 2009, p. 5), which, as we discuss below, may be the case in the episodes described here.

As Waring (2009) writes, in some cases, teachers make use of chains of IRF sequences (Schegloff, 2007) as a way to check on the answers of a "previously completed exercise" (p. 801). Gourlay (2005) also writes about such chains, in her work on homework "checking episodes." Both Waring and Gourlay focus on how teachers and students move in and out of the relatively strict question/answer format of these episodes, rather than on the uneventful moments of the sequences themselves.

1.2.2 Choral responses

In their seminal work on turn-taking, Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) described in close detail how participants take the floor in conversation, including the fact that, "overwhelmingly, one party talks at a time" (p. 699). Put briefly, Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson suggest that at the end of a turn, the next speaker is selected in one of three ways. Either the current speaker continues to talk; the current speaker nominates another speaker; or another speaker self-selects. As these authors pointed out, this system holds true for "ordinary" (Drew & Heritage, 1992) conversations, but is often organized differently in institutional settings, including the classroom. For instance, van Lier (1988) notes that many students may speak at the same time "only if they say (roughly) the same thing" (p. 139). Lerner (2002) also describes the classroom as one setting where "opportunities for choral production" (p. 34) are available. Interestingly, he writes that whole class interactions in many classrooms can be seen as consisting of only "two parties – the teacher and the students" (p. 34; cf. Sahlström, 2002). Dobs (2014) teases apart choral responses to show the messiness of these actions, looking at what she calls students' "collective translation" following teacher elicitation (e.g., "How do you say X?"). These elicitations are much more open-ended than the text-oriented prompts we focus on here, and so possible student responses are also much more limited in this data set than in Dobs' work.

1.3 Environment and object

Within multimodal CA, there is increasing attention to the ecological environment, including objects. Nevile, Haddington, Heinemann, and Ruaniomaa (2014) talk about "the *interactional ecology of objects* [emphasis in original]", noting that "objects are situated within and contribute to developing processes and trajectories of social action" (p. 17). Nevile et al. (2014) examine both the creation of objects during interaction, e.g., writing (Mondada & Svinhufvud, 2016), as well as how participants "interact with objects, and use objects to interact with others" (Nevile et al., 2014, p. 4). van Lier (2002) looks specifically at the role of objects

and spatial configurations in classrooms, describing the interactional consequences of different formations when teacher and student are looking together at the same document (cf. Tolins, 2013).

Objects may prove instrumental in the structuring of sequences, as well as delineating appropriate kinds of participation. Mikkola and Lehtinen (2014) and Nevile et al. (2014b) show how objects may play a role in ordering (cf. Matarese & Caswell 2017a, 2017b). Particularly relevant to the episodes in the current study, Mikkola and Lehtinen note that "the known-in-advance status of the items...can be used as a resource by the participants" (p. 76). This study likewise finds that the text itself often seems to exercise more control over participation than the participants themselves.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Settings and Data Collection

The data for this study is drawn from two large corpora: one a CA study (Jacknick, 2009) examining the nature of student participation in ESL classrooms (hereafter ESL data), and the other an interactional ethnography of an urban community college literacy classroom (hereafter Reading data). The ESL data was collected from an advanced level class in an adult community language program, with video recordings of each class of the summer session. Two to three cameras were placed throughout the room, and the researcher was present to record field notes. Although some of the students were interested in pursuing higher education in English, this was not an English for Academic Purposes class, but rather a general interest ESL course. Besides their diverse English language learning goals, the students in the class represent a wide range of ages, countries of origin, and native languages.ⁱ In contrast, the Reading data was drawn from a community college where all students are matriculated. This reading class is a requirement for these students because of their failing scores on the college-wide entrance exam. While some students in the Reading classroom are immigrants with diverse first languages, more than half of the students in the class are native speakers of English, and most are in their late teens or early twenties. Three cameras were used to collect the Reading data, and a researcher was present at each session to record field notes. One class session per week was recorded in the Reading data, during 11 weeks of a 15-week semester.

2.2 Analytic Methods

Data consist of video recordings of each session, as well as artifacts, e.g., handouts and lesson plans. Initial analysis involved a review and verbatim transcription of all video recordings following CA conventions (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008). The excerpts were chosen because they represent examples of "materials mode" (Walsh, 2006, 2011), where the teacher maintains an open floor through chained IRFs. Many examples of this mode were found in both corpora, approximately one for each hour of recorded classroom time. Of these, approximately ½ involved an open floorⁱⁱ. The excerpts here are representative, and were chosen for analytic clarity and space concerns. The verbatim transcripts were adapted to show the temporality and sequentiality of embodied actions and their coordination with turns at talk (Mondada, 2013). See Appendix 5.1 for full transcription conventions.

Analysis followed CA methods (Sidnell & Stivers, 2013), focusing on the sequentiality of participants' verbal and embodied actions, beginning with the creation of a detailed transcript (i.e., transcribing *is* analysis). This analysis departs from Mondada's (2001/2014) conventions in a few important ways. First, symbols used for multimodal actions are presented before the transcripts, rather than in the appendix. This is intended to increase readability of the transcripts, as well as to allow for the duplicate use of some symbols. That is to say, while care has been taken to associate symbols with participants across excerpts, due to the large number of participants, in some cases, a symbol will be associated with two different participants in

different excerpts. Second, although many levels of multimodal action were included as part of the initial analysis, the transcripts below have been simplified to focus on analytically relevant actions. Finally, in cases where most or all students can be said to be performing the "same" multimodal action, e.g., gaze to their books, we will note this in our prose, but not in the transcripts. Including each student individually in such cases would obscure the focal actions in the interaction, and consolidating them in one line labeled "Ss" is contrary to our purposes here. We use "Ss" for choral turns only when it is not possible to tell, based on the video, exactly who is speaking.

3. FINDINGS

In this section, we analyze four examples of open floor, materials mode interactions. We start by discussing turn-taking generally, looking first at choral responses, and then at the importance of written texts in each of these interactions. Next, we explore student engagement in more detail, attempting to understand the actions of individual students within whole-class interactions.

3.1 Choral Responses: Who's in the Chorus?

In the classroom, multiple students often speak at once. Below, we attempt, given the limits of technology, to open up such "choral" responses, looking at the timing of student responses, and at who is included when student turns are characterized by multiple voices in overlap. We start with an example taken from the ESL data, notable both for the careful timing of student turns, and for repeated (verbal) participation by just a few students. As the extract begins, students have just completed a grammar exercise individually. Note: Because our focus here is on teacher and student talk, in the interest of clarity, we have removed other actions (such as gaze and gesture) from both transcriptions in this section.

(2) Gerund vs. Infinitive

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1      TEA  ((teeth suck)) Okay.
2      (0.2)
3      TEA  So let's go over the answers.
4      Page ninety: or: ninety:
5      eight. Page ninety nine.
6      Okay. So I think the first sentence
7      could be "have? ing? or to have."
8      (1.2)
9      TEA  Um. >"A seven day week seemed ↑strange
10     to sociologists since there was no
11     corresponding geophysical event as
12     there was with the solar day or the
13     lunar month.<(0.4) They <tended?">
14     (0.2)
15     FLO  "To[:]"
16     NOB  ["T]o,"
17     TEA  "to attribute? it to our cultures,
18     and not to biology." Okay?
19     >"However other organisms also have a seven
20     day cycle, and a week is after all a quarter
21     of a lunar cycle. At the end of the French
22     Revolution, the revolutionary government
23     wanted,"<

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24 (0.2)
 25 NOB "To, "=
 26 FLO ="To, "
 27 SAC? ["To, "
 28 TEA ["to]establish a ten day week. but the
 29 attempt failed,"
 30 NOB "to, "=
 31 TEA ="to [work."] Good."In the former Soviet
 32 JIN? ["work."]
 33 ROD ["work."]
 34 TEA "Union, the rulers also experimented with-"
 35 NOB "Mod[ifying."]
 36 FLO ["Modif]ying?=
 37 ROD ="Modifying."
 38 TEA "Modifying." Yes. "Modifying the week by?"
 39 Ss ["Trying."]
 40 Ss ["Trying?"]
 41 TEA "Trying? five >day and six day weeks.<"

The teacher provides the first answer (lines 6–7) and then after a pause (line 8), goes on to read the next itemⁱⁱⁱ. She reads through a sentence rather quickly, pauses before the next, and then stops at the blank in the exercise, finishing with the upturn of a question (lines 9 through 13), a designedly incomplete utterance (DIU, Koshik, 2002).

Two students respond with the word “to” (i.e., the first part of the correct answer) – first Florence (line 15), and then Nobu (line 16). The teacher repeats the word “to” and then completes the sentence (lines 17-18). The teacher closes this item with “okay,” using upward intonation. Without waiting for a response (or looking up), she moves on to the next item, reading from the book (lines 19-23). Here again, the teacher stops at the blank (line 23), and after a brief pause, first Nobu, and then Florence respond (lines 25 & 26). This pattern continues, with the teacher making a space for student answers, and one or more students responding. We note however, that of the 10 students present, 5 do not speak at all (or speak a maximum of 1 time, if they are in the choral responses in lines 39 & 40). Table 1, below, shows the pattern of verbal responses in this excerpt.

Table 1: Verbal turns

Student Name	Number of Responses
Nobu	5 or 6
Florence	4 or 5
Rodrigo	3 or 4
Sachiko	2 or 3
JinAe	1 or 2
Remaining 5 students	0 or 1

We also note the adept timing of student responses in this excerpt. The teacher, who is reading relatively lengthy passages aloud, generally speeds up slightly as she reads, slowing down when she comes to the end of an item, thus marking the place where a student response would be appropriate. The skillful timing we see throughout these data is perhaps unsurprising, given that students have access to the texts the teacher is reading. Thus, the potential chaos of an open floor is at least partially alleviated by the order provided by a text.

We turn next to the Reading data in order to understand the complexity of choral responses in similar sequences but in a different classroom setting. This excerpt offers several examples of the potential complexities that may be hidden in what seems to be a simple choral response. Here, teacher and students are checking answers to a vocabulary exercise (Appendix 5.3), an activity with which the teacher starts most classes.

(3) Vocabulary Review – Hypnotize

1 TEA =Alright? so down below you can just call these out,
 2 to hypnotize or fascinate?
 3 KAR Desp[ise,]
 4 ZEO [Mes][merize.]
 5 MAH [Desp]ise.
 6 KAR [>I mean<][mesmerize,]
 7 NAN [Mesmerize,]
 8 VER [Mesmerize.]
 9 TEA \$Mesmerize\$. A great or complete change?
 10 Ss Metamorpho[sis.]
 11 S? [Meto]morpho[sis.]
 12 TEA [Cru]de or exaggerated?
 13 Ss [Travesty.]
 14 NAN [T[ravesty]]?
 15 ZEO [Travest]y.
 16 TEA Done only as a routine? Something you
 17 don't care [about?]
 18 S? [Perfunc](tr-).
 19 Ss Perfunctory.
 20 TEA Perfunctory. Perfunctory. Known widely
 21 but un↑favorably.
 22 MAH Notori[ous.]
 23 ZEO [°Noto]ri[ous].°
 24 ISA? [No]torious.
 25 TEA =Notorious. Tending to arouse interest?
 26 ZEO Pro[°vocative.°]
 27 MAH [Provocative.]
 28 Ss [°Provocati]ve.°
 29 TEA Provocative?

In line 1, the teacher starts with a boundary marker "alright" (Seedhouse, 2004) and then an explicit reference to the text ("so down below") followed by an orientation to the open floor, instructing students to "just call these out." Given the teacher's explanation of his expectations for participation, the rising intonation in line 2 potentially sets up the first definition as a first pair part question for students to answer. Karina first says *Despise* (line 3), overlapped by Zeo saying *Mesmerize* (line 4). In line 5, Mahmoud, who is seated next to Zeo and sharing his book with her, echoes Karina's initial, incorrect response, rather than Zeo's correct response. Karina realizes her mistake as Zeo begins to speak in overlap, and, in line 6, overlaps Zeo and Mahmoud with a self-repair, saying *I mean, mesmerize*. Two other students, Nancy and Veronica, also give the correct response (lines 7 & 8), matching Karina's timing. The teacher reacts to this cascading choral response of correct and incorrect answers by repeating the correct answer with smiley voice. He does not orient to the trouble in any other way, and instead moves directly to the next definition. Thus, what might have appeared as one line in a transcript^{iv} with "all" students saying "mesmerize" is revealed to contain two errors, and a self-repair.

We see another sequence in lines 9 through 11, where a choral response is followed by a single student giving the same answer in overlap. In the next sequence, most students produce the target word "travesty" with falling intonation, with Nancy overlapping the same word with rising intonation (lines 13 & 14). Zeo overlaps as well (line 15), though with a short delay, producing the word slightly after the rest of the class. Again, what might have appeared as one uncomplicated choral response is shown to be two potentially different types of responses based on intonation, as well as a delayed response.

The next two sequences show slight changes in teacher delivery and their possible effects on student responses. First, the teacher gives two definitions for one item (lines 16 & 17). This is followed by one of the few examples of students overlapping a teacher turn in this data (line 18). This answer is cut off and shows pronunciation difficulty. Several students echo the word in line 19, some with similar pronunciation difficulty. The teacher may be orienting to this difficulty when he repeats the lexical item twice in line 20, emphasizing the stressed syllable.

In lines 20-21, the teacher produces the definition with falling intonation (a change from prior instances in this sequence), and, interestingly, fewer students respond than previously. Mahmoud responds first, overlapped by Zeo, who produces the lexical item very quietly, and who is in turn overlapped by Isabelle. The teacher then joins in the cascading choral response himself, echoing the lexical item in line 25 before moving on to the next item. The excerpt ends with a final IRF sequence, including both single students responding, and what seems to be multiple students speaking simultaneously (lines 26-28).

In this section, as in the previous example, student turns are carefully timed. We see overlap among students, but only one example of a student overlapping with a teacher (line 18). Interestingly, this occurs after the teacher has provided two definitions for one word (lines 16 & 17), a departure from his usual routine. It is possible that this change is one reason for the unusual timing in the next student turn. We also see a few students speaking multiple times, while most of the 20 students present are silent throughout the exchange.

3.2 Orientation to materials

We continue by noting the importance of the text as a point of reference for both teacher and students. Excerpt 4, below, offers a clear example of how participants seem to orient visually towards the text rather than each other. This excerpt occurs at the beginning of an ESL class session, just after participants have been discussing upcoming assessments. In this transcription, we include both talk and gaze, but have not included most other forms of action unless they are directly related to our analysis.

(4) Parts of Speech

*	Teacher gaze
θ	Teacher manipulation of object
⊕	Teacher movement
Δ	Florence gaze
+	Rodrigo gaze
#	Amelie gaze
Σ	Nobu gaze
1	TEA *((teeth suck)**Tomorrow's quiz is a little tea *gaze to board **gaze to students-->
2	bit different because um it's vocabulary
3	and grammar and listening. So it's three

4 parts tomorrow. But, ** θ nothing that we
 -->**gaze to page-->
 tea θ lifts page-->

5 haven't been doing.** θ Everything should be
 -->**gaze to students-->
 --> θ

6 okay. Ok θ **ay? ** $\theta\theta$ So there are less
 -->**gaze to page**gaze to students-->
 θ lifts page $\theta\theta$ flips page-->

7 vocabulary words this week,** $\theta\theta$ we have *
 -->**gaze to page*
 --> $\theta\theta$ flips page θ

8 * θ twelve, θ so from twelve, I'm going to
 *gaze to Ss-->
 θ beat w page θ

9 test you on ten of the words. * θ (0.2) θ *
 gaze to page
 θ flips page θ

10 TEA Okay? **Let's read um, the word, coordinated?*
 -->**gaze to page *

11 * θ coordinated? θ Coordinated? Um,**Eiko *
 *gaze to Eiko **gaze to page*
 θ page to chin θ

12 can you read both sentences for coordinated,
 [49 lines omitted]

13 TEA * Δ Okay good. So the Δ "alert" $\Delta\Delta$ in the first
 flo Δ ---->gaze to page Δ gaze to T $\Delta\Delta$ gaze to paper-->
 tea *-->gaze to page-->

14 TEA sentence i::s what. * Δ A nou:n, an adjective,
 tea -->*gaze up to front table-->

15 TEA (°what.°)
 16 (0.2)
 17 FLO °A noun?°

18 TEA *A noun. ∞ Good. (0.2) ∞ +Second + sentence?
 tea *gaze to page-->
 rod +gaze to T+

19 (0.1)*(0.1)
 tea *gaze up slightly-->

20 FLO (It's) adjective?*=
 tea -->*

21 TEA * \oplus +=[Adjective.] \oplus +=
 22 NOB [Adjective.]
 23 Ss [Adjective.] ∞
 tea *gaze to page-->
 tea \oplus nod \oplus
 rod +gaze to T +
 yor -->=

24 TEA Good. =Third sentence?
 25 FLO °Verb?°

26 ROD Σ It's +[verb.]
 27 NOB [Ver*b.]
 nob Σ gaze to T-->
 rod +gaze to T-->
 tea -->*gaze to Nobu-->

28 **TEA** Δ Verb. Σ + = Good. Δ We use it in all =
 nob --> Σ
 rod -->+
 flo Δ gaze to T. Δ

29 **TEA** (0.4) **those ways.
 -->**gaze to page>>

As the teacher finishes discussing an upcoming quiz, she begins to look down at the page (line 4), which she flips to show students just before transitioning into the activity with *So* (line 6). She begins the exercise with her gaze to the paper, saying “Let’s read” (line 10)—thus referring explicitly to the text (a handout which she distributed to students, see Appendix 5.4). All students remain looking down at the text unless otherwise noted in the transcript. The first part of this episode is marked by the teacher calling on specific students (lines 11-12, and 49 omitted lines^y). She then shifts to an open floor, posing a question, and waiting for a student response (line 13-16). As the teacher asks about the part of speech for “alert,” (lines 13 and 14), her gaze is to the page, though Florence looks up briefly, and then goes back to her page. Once the question is completed, the teacher moves directly into offering two candidate answers, looking up towards the table in front of her (line 14). After a brief pause, Florence, seated at a different table, responds quietly (line 17). Florence’s gaze remains down towards her paper, and the teacher’s gaze does not move to Florence, but instead goes back to her own paper as she repeats the answer and offers an explicit positive assessment (EPA, Waring, 2008) in line 18.

Next, rather than reading the sentence, the teacher simply refers to the list, saying “second sentence?” (line 18). With the exception of Rodrigo (line 18), who looks up towards the teacher, all visible students have their eyes down. The teacher’s gaze is slightly up, as Florence (who is not in the teacher’s line of sight) responds, her gaze still to her paper (line 20). The teacher looks at her own paper as she repeats Florence’s answer, in concert with several students (lines 21–23). The only student to look up is Rodrigo, whose gaze goes to the teacher just as she repeats the correct answer (lines 23). In the next sequence (line 24), Florence, Rodrigo, and Nobu offer the answer (lines 25-27). Nobu looks up before speaking and Rodrigo looks up just as he delivers the answer *verb*. The teacher’s gaze goes to Nobu in line 27 as Rodrigo and Nobu are almost finished speaking, and she expands on this sequence in lines 28-29. She then looks back down as she prepares to move on.

Here, then, the teacher uses a numbered list of sentences to order the interaction. She starts by looking for and referring to a text – one which holds the gaze of both teacher and students throughout the excerpt. Indeed, teacher and students spend most of their time with their eyes down, even when a student answers the teacher’s question. Both the teacher’s initial reference to a text, and the visual focus on that text are characteristic of all examples of these exchanges in our data.

Indeed, in each case, we see the teacher start with an explicit reference to the text. This reference is usually accompanied by a multimodal action such as a gaze-shift (towards the text), and/or page-turning. We see students then shift their gaze towards the text, and students and teacher alike spend the majority of their time looking down at a page rather than at each other. Thus, teacher and students are generally not orienting towards mutual gaze. We can also note that the text is used as an ordering device. Because everyone has access to the text, the teacher’s turns can be relatively rote, such that they simply refer to the order of an item. The teacher’s talk consists largely of reading from the text, repeating students answers, and—perhaps—brief EPAs, such as “good.” Turn-taking in this section is also characteristic of all similar extracts in our data. First, although we see multiple examples of student turns in overlap throughout these extracts

(and others in the data set), neither teacher nor students orient to this as a problem. At the same time, these turns-in-overlap only include a few students at a time (often the same students throughout an excerpt), which leads us to question their characterization as “choral” responses. Interestingly, we see almost no examples of students overlapping with teacher talk (possible reasons for one exception are discussed above.) In the next section, we look in more detail at student actions, particularly those of students who do not speak during a given exchange.

3.3 Student Participation: Multimodal Actions

Given the relative scarcity (and brevity) of student talk in these episodes, we now turn to students’ multimodal actions. Excerpt (1a) (expanded from Excerpt 1 above), from the Reading data, occurs after students have completed a vocabulary exercise (see Appendix 5.5). As they were working individually, a student asked the teacher whether one of the words could be a real place, which led to a discussion of real places named “Utopia,” including Utopia Parkway, a road in Queens, New York.

(1a) Vocabulary — Utopia

* Teacher gaze
 θ Teacher movement
 ⊕ Teacher multimodal action
 Δ Alice gaze
 φ Alice multimodal action
 + Mahmoud multimodal action
 # Zeo multimodal action
 Σ Tom multimodal action
 π Karina multimodal action
 ∞ Chen multimodal action
 ∇ Robert multimodal action
 Φ Heather multimodal action
 ± Olivia multimodal action
 ⊗ Isabelle multimodal action
 & Wendy multimodal action
 Ψ Student gaze

1 **TEA They really should[⊕] name it. They**
 tea >>smiling ⊕
 ss >>gaze to T-->
 oli >>gaze to book-->

2 **TEA should θrename it [⊕]not utopia [parkway.[⊕]**
 3 **Ss [uh-hi-heh**
 tea θturns back, walks to desk-->
 tea ⊕waves hand, nods ⊕

4 **+(0.2)Δ(0.1)++(0.5)**
 ali Δgaze down-->
 mah +smiling ++gaze down-->

5 **TEA *[Utopia parkway.θ∞ΦAlright.∞**
 tea *gaze to book-->
 tea -->θ
 che ∞gaze down∞
 hea Φgaze down-->

6 **TEA ∞[⊕]So down below?[⊕] just-#φπ∞you can φ**

che ∞ gaze to T ∞ gaze to book-->
 tea \oplus hands to chair \oplus
 zeo #gaze to book-->
 ali ϕ pencil to book ϕ
 kar π gaze to book-->
 7 **TEA** call them out here, ∇ an ∞ ideal or a ∞
 rob ∇ ...pencil to paper-->
 che ∞ gaze up ∞
 8 **TEA** ∞ perfect place- ∇ (0.2)##or #
 che ∞ gaze to book-->
 rob ∇
 zeo -->##gaze up#
 9 **TEA** #state? \oplus
 zeo #gaze to book-->
 tea \opluslifts R hand-->
 10 **HEA** \uparrow U[\oplus topia.] \oplus
 11 **CHE** [$^{\circ}$ Utopia. $^{\circ}$]
 tea \oplus ,,,,,, \oplus
 12 **TEA** ∞ Utopi[a? ∞ ∇
 13 **MAH** [Utopia. e[heheh]
 14 **TEA** [$\pi\phi$ \$noisy\$]
 che ∞ gaze to T ∞
 rob ∇ writing-->
 kar π writing-->
 ali ϕ writing-->
 15 **TEA** \$and disorderly\$? Or [bois]terous?
 [Rauc-]
 16 **S?** Ru[ckus.
 17 **SS** [Rau[cous.
 18 **MAH** [Ruckus.
 19 **SS** Raucous.
 20 **TEA** Raucous? Okay? π A source of help, $\nabla\phi$
 kar --> π
 rob --> ∇
 ali --> ϕ
 21 **TEA** a \otimes strength, $\otimes\otimes$ something to turn to,
 isa \otimes head up $\otimes\otimes$-->
 22 **TEA** \otimes an option"?
 isa \otimes head back on wall-->
 23 **OLI** \pm [Recourse.
 24 **Ss** [Rec[ourse.]
 25 **MAH** [Recour]se?
 oli \pm gaze up-->
 26 **S** Recourse, ∇
 rob ∇ writing-->
 27 **TEA** Recourse? \pm Right? Or a choice?
 oli --> \pm

As this excerpt starts, the teacher makes a joke about Utopia Parkway, looking at the students, and smiling as he speaks (lines 1-2). Then, in line 5, he closes this sequence, repeating the phrase "Utopia parkway," and saying "alright" with falling intonation. His actions, however, imply that he is finished even earlier; he turns and walks towards his desk as he delivers his joke,

and, at that moment, both Alice and Mahmoud turn their gaze down (line 4). The teacher likewise looks down to the book when he says the word “utopia” (line 5). As the teacher says “alright,” and immediately after he looks towards the book, we see Chen and Heather both look down towards their books (line 5). Chen looks up as the teacher tells students where to look on their page (line 6), and then immediately turns her gaze down again. At the same time, two other students (Zeo and Karina) also look down, and Alice puts her pencil to her page (line 6). In the next few moments, as the teacher starts the exercise (lines 7 - 9), Robert moves his pencil to his book, and Chen looks up and then down again briefly, followed by Zeo who does the same. We note these seemingly tiny details to show how individual students seem to be responding to the teacher’s cues as he starts this episode.

During the first IRF sequence (which centers around the recently-discussed word “utopia”), none of the students visible on camera are engaged in writing while students call out potential answers (lines 10 & 11), but three students start writing after the teacher validates the correct answer in line 12. These three students — Robert, Karina, and Alice — do not offer verbal responses during this sequence. They continue writing through the next sequence and the beginning of the following one (lines 14 – 20). In the final sequence in this extract, the teacher moves on to the word “recourse” (lines 20 – 27). Here, as several students provide the answer (Olivia, Mahmoud, and a group of students: lines 23 – 26) – Robert (who does not speak) starts to write again. Thus, in this exchange, as in others we describe above, verbal responses are provided by some, but by no means all students. However, some students who are silent *are* engaged in writing. The timing of their writing seems to correspond with the appearance of answers on the floor, either from other students, or from the teacher. That said, as we will note below, we don’t actually know *what* the students are writing, or if they are actually engaged with the activity at hand.

By looking closely at this single, relatively brief moment of classroom interaction, we have attempted to show what an analyst (and perhaps also a teacher) can and cannot discover about individual student actions during materials mode sequences. In particular, we noted that students who would be seen to be not participating if we relied on voice alone, time their gaze and writing to the verbal participation of others. However, unlike verbal turns, which are apparent on a recording (and to a teacher and fellow students), writing remains a private activity in these excerpts. For this reason, and because teachers do not orient to these activities (at least in these data), thus providing us with a possible next-turn, we are unable to make claims about this kind of participation. We discuss this, as well as broader questions related to participation in open floor materials mode exchanges, below.

4. DISCUSSION

The excerpts we discuss here are clear examples of what Walsh (2006, 2011) calls “materials mode.” We suggest that a turn-by-turn analysis may simultaneously offer insights into the skillful work required by these apparently simple interactions, and elucidate potential limitations, both analytic and pedagogical, of this common classroom activity.

4.1. The Text as Ordering Object

These excerpts are characterized by an open floor, where the teacher does not nominate a particular student. In addition, students do not raise their hands before speaking (something which does occur in other materials mode interactions in these data). In fact, in Excerpt 2, we hear the teacher explicitly telling students to “call them out” (line 1). Given the open floor, it is perhaps unsurprising that we also hear considerable overlap throughout. As we mention above,

however, although students speak in overlap with each other, and the teacher also at times overlaps with students, we almost never see students speaking in overlap with the teacher's initiation^{vi}. That is, students wait for teachers to fully complete their questioning turns before providing a response, a markedly different practice from what is found in most “ordinary” conversations (Drew & Heritage, 1992; Jefferson, 1984).

In a sense, then, the underlying action oriented to by teacher and at least some students seems to be that of completing a text, and most importantly, the underlying structure of these episodes is that of the text. We see this most clearly in Excerpt 4, where the teacher does not read, but simply refers to sentences by number. The list of items provides the order usually created by teachers nominating students, or by students raising their hands. Teachers and students are looking at the text rather than at each other, the teacher reads previously printed material, and the students voice their additions to this material. To use Goffman's (1981) terminology, participants are acting as animators, but not authors. Even when students are reading work they have completed, they are simply providing the correct answer as determined by the textbook or teacher, not necessarily expressing their own thoughts or beliefs. Given this, it is perhaps less surprising that neither teachers nor students orient to students speaking simultaneously. If the focus is not on who speaks, but rather on the fact of a correct answer being provided, it doesn't matter if more than one person provides the answer simultaneously. Thus, we suggest that one way of understanding these exchanges is as highly ritualized institutional interactions, where teacher and students are more focused on a text and on answers than on each other. Thus, while the lack of student engagement inherent in this kind of exercise (Brown & Lee, 2015) is an issue (as we will discuss below), CA offers a view into the quite skillful work such an apparently simple interaction requires (Macbeth, 2011).

4.2. Analytical and Pedagogical Limits

The lack of gaze between teacher and students is one of the most salient characteristics of these sequences. This feature seems to point to a general atmosphere where the teacher is not orienting to contributions by specific students. Of course, there is some element of responsiveness, most notably the students' careful timing of responses and the teachers' use of explicit positive assessment (Waring, 2008) (Excerpt 4), repetition (Excerpts 1, 2, 3, & 4), or even a lack of response (Excerpts 2 & 3) to orient to correct student responses. Still, the focus on text as opposed to human interlocutors causes difficulty for an analyst. One key feature of conversation as it is understood by CA is contingency (Drew, 2013). Speakers create their turns in the moment, in response to what came before, providing a built-in checking system for analysts, who can look at “next” turns to better understand how participants seem to understand each other and the interaction itself. One example of how this kind of next-turn is missing in these sequences can be found in Excerpt 3, lines 13 to 15. As we note above, multiple students respond here to a teacher question, with differing intonations. Because the teacher does not seem to orient to individual students, we have no way of knowing how this intonation is understood by participants^{vii}.

Thus, as we began to look more closely both at who was speaking when, and at students' multimodal actions, we began to see some of both the strengths and the limitations of this form of analysis. Noting both the importance of the text, and the interactional skill involved in moving through that text are of interest. Attending to a range of student actions—as opposed to just talk—may provide clues to how students engage with this activity, and how they accomplish *doing-being-students* in this common classroom mode. While Walsh (2006; 2011) focuses on verbal actions in his description of the interactional features of materials mode, we have shown here that there are common multimodal interactional features of this mode as well, including

lack of mutual gaze and/or gaze towards objects. However, as discourse analysts, it is important to note that we cannot make any assumptions about what participants are actually thinking or understanding when they do not engage verbally.

That is, as we mention above, we don't actually know, for example, what students are writing when their pens move across the page. Nor do we know what prompts a student to look at another students' book, up at the teacher, or back down at their page. We share this lack of knowledge with the teacher, who does not even have the advantage of multiple video cameras and time to watch the recordings. Our goal here is not to suggest a lack of attention on the part of the teacher. In fact, our own difficulties in creating these transcriptions made us conscious of how difficult it is for teachers to keep track of individual students during this kind of interaction.

Finally, we note that whole-class interaction has often been defined as a form of two-party interaction, where the parties consist of the teacher and the class as a whole (Lerner, 2002). The practice of transcribing choral responses as if one participant were speaking suggests that many researchers orient to this way of understanding these interactions (even though Lerner (2002) does not). And, as we mention above, one could argue that neither teacher nor students differentiate between one student and many students responding. If we treat the entire class as one party, we can argue that many teacher turns in these excerpts are examples of "current speaker selects next" (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974), rather than the next speaker selecting themselves. That is, the teacher is selecting "the class," and as long as at least one student responds, the interaction can proceed. However, we have found that a close analysis of individual student actions may provide insights into what we can—and cannot—understand about teacher and student actions. And, as we will discuss in the next section, treating the whole class as a single participant may have pedagogical consequences.

4.3. Pedagogical implications

For teachers, we suggest that a CA analysis may also lead to more questions than answers. Most importantly, we ask what pedagogical goals are accomplished with these sequences. As we imply above, noticing who speaks—and who doesn't—during apparent choral response episodes has important pedagogical implications. If goals for materials mode, as suggested by Walsh (2011, p. 116), include language practice and checking and displaying answers, the reality that only a few students are verbally engaged in these sequences is important information for teachers. If the goal is to make sure students know the "right" answer to a series of questions, this could be accomplished more quickly by the teacher reading the answers aloud. However, both of these options present at least two major issues. As we discuss above, there is no way for the teacher to know a) if any given individual student is attending to the public accounting of the answers, and b) whether there is any actual student understanding. Indeed, given the teachers' focus on materials rather than on students, and the lack of attention to who is actually participating, teachers do not seem to be orienting to student understanding at all. In other words, by focusing on a correct answer, rather than on the human beings offering (or not) such a response, teachers may lose the opportunity to assess—and actually respond to—student responses. As Creider (2016) writes, student responses to teacher-fronted questions are often used as a stand-in for engaged participation, and we agree that other teacher actions may have more pedagogical value. For instance, if the goals include public airing of correct answers, student language use, *and* understanding, small group or pair work might provide a more interactive learning environment. Clearly, further research would be required before we could suggest that teachers avoid materials mode entirely. However, as we write above, these exchanges are often ignored—or at least taken for granted—by analysts, teachers, and teacher-educators. We suggest, then, that it is worth moving this type of interaction out of the realm of unexamined ritual and into the realm of careful analysis.

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5. APPENDICES

5.1 Transcription Conventions (CA conventions adapted from Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008 and multimodal conventions adapted from Mondada, 2001/2016)

(1.8)	Numbers enclosed in parentheses indicate a pause.
[]	Brackets show that portions of utterances overlap with a portion of another speaker's utterance.
::	A colon shows elongation of sound.
(hh), .hh	Onomatopoeic representations of audible exhalation of air (e.g., a laugh).
?	A question mark indicates rising intonation.
.	A period indicates that falling intonation.
,	A comma indicates a continuation of tone.
-	A dash indicates an abrupt cut off.
↑↓	Up/down arrows indicate sharply rising or falling intonation, placed just before the change in intonation.
<u>Under</u>	Underlining indicates emphasis on the underlined portion of the word.
CAPS	Capital letters indicate higher than the speaker's normal volume.
°°	This indicates much softer volume than normal for the speaker.
> <, < >	'Greater than' and 'less than' signs indicate noticeably faster, or slower
(would)	speech than the surrounding talk.
	Parentheses indicate that the transcriber could not decipher the talk. If there is no guess as to what was said, parentheses enclose blank space.
\$C'mon\$	Dollar signs are used to indicate a smiley or jokey voice.
“ ”	Quotation marks indicate that speakers are reading from a book.
**	Embodied actions are delimited between two identical symbols (one symbol per participant), and are synchronized with talk or time.
*--->	The action described continues across subsequent lines
---->*	until the same symbol is reached.
>>	The action described begins before the excerpt's beginning.
---->>	The action described continues after the excerpt's end.
.....	Action's preparation.
----	Action's apex is reached and maintained.
,,,,,	Action's retraction.
tea	Participant doing the action is identified when (s)he is not the speaker.

5.2 Excerpt 2: Gerund vs. Infinitive Textbook Exercise

- 1 Complete the passage by changing the verb in parentheses to a gerund or infinitive, as appropriate.

(1. **Have**) _____ a seven-day week seemed strange to sociologists since there was no corresponding geophysical event as there was with the solar day or the lunar month. They tended (2. **attribute**) _____ it to our cultures and not to biology.

However, other organisms also have a seven-day cycle, and a week is, after all, a quarter of a lunar cycle. At the end of the French Revolution, the revolutionary government wanted (3. **establish**) _____ a ten-day week, but the attempt failed (4. **work**) _____. In the former Soviet Union, the rulers also experimented with (5. **modify**) _____ the week by (6. **try**) _____ five-day and six-day weeks. Again, people rejected (7. **change**) _____ the length of their week. They seemed (8. **need**) _____ (9. **have**) _____ one day out of every seven in order to reset their body clocks.

Sometimes it is difficult (10. **perceive**) _____ our weekly rhythms, but these rhythms show up most strongly during times of stress. For the body (11. **fight off**) _____ a cold, it needs about a week. The symptoms of chicken pox show up about two weeks after the patient's (12. **be**) _____ exposed to the disease. Health care workers expect (13. **see**) _____ patients with pneumonia and malaria at greatest risk after one week of (14. **fight**) _____ these diseases. Transplant patients risk (15. **have**) _____ their bodies reject their new organs after seven days.

By (16. **examine**) _____ this evidence, sociologists have had reason to reconsider their previous ideas about the origin of the seven-day week.

5.3 Excerpt 3: Hypnotize Vocabulary Workbook Exercise

Matching Words with Definitions

Following are definitions of the ten words. Clearly write or print each word next to its definition. The sentences above and on the previous page will help you decide on the meaning of each word.

1. mesmerize To hypnotize or fascinate; hold spellbound
2. metamorphosis A great or complete change; transformation
3. travesty A crude, exaggerated, or ridiculous representation; mockery
4. perfunctory Done only as a routine, with little care or interest; performed with no interest or enthusiasm
5. notorious Known widely but unfavorably; having a bad reputation
6. provocative Tending to arouse interest or curiosity
7. facsimile An exact copy or reproduction
8. esoteric Intended for or understood by only a certain group; beyond the understanding of most people
9. austere Without decoration or luxury; severely simple
10. grotesque Distorted or strikingly inconsistent in shape, appearance, or manner

5.4 Excerpt 4: Parts of Speech Vocabulary Handout

Vocabulary Review (6/16)

1. coordinated: The government coordinated different relief efforts to try to save people quickly as possible. Because of her dance background, she is very coordinated and graceful.
2. surge: A surge of water swept over the boat./ A surge of anger swept over him.
3. authorities: The authorities are corrupt! / My teacher has no authority over me.
4. evacuations: They could not do evacuations quickly enough and so there were too many unnecessary deaths.
5. alert: New Yorkers were put on terrorist alerts often after 9/11. / Oh, he is so alert after drinking coffee! / Please alert your neighbors that a storm is coming.
6. assertions: She made public assertions which later caused her problems.
7. postulated: People postulated that Barack Obama would win if Hillary Clinton would run as his vice-president.
8. catastrophe: Cycle Nargis was a huge, terrible, monstrous, horrifying catastrophe.
9. pinpoint: I can pinpoint the exact day and hour I fell in love with my wife.
10. severe: That was a severe storm/ My parents are too severe/ My father gave me a severe look.
11. skim: I skimmed my paper to check for any mistakes before handing it in/ I like to skim the fat from the chicken stock before I use it.
12. puny: He's so puny because he doesn't work out.

5.5 Excerpt 1/1a: Utopia Vocabulary Workbook Exercise

Matching Words with Definitions

Following are definitions of the ten words. Clearly write or print each word next to its definition. The sentences above and on the previous page will help you decide on the meaning of each word.

1. utopia An ideal or perfect place or state; a place achieving social or political perfection
2. raucous Noisy and disorderly; boisterous
3. recourse A source of help, security, or strength; something to turn to; option
4. bureaucratic Insisting on strict rules and routine, often to the point of hindering effectiveness
5. reiterate To state again or repeatedly
6. autonomy Independence; self-government
7. mandate A group's expressed wishes; clear signal to act; vote of confidence
8. ostracize To expel or exclude from a group; shun
9. tantamount Equal in effect or value; the same as
10. tenacious Holding firmly; persistent; stubborn

ⁱ All names have been changed to protect participants' anonymity.

ⁱⁱ In total, there were 16 materials mode sequences in the transcribed Reading data (a portion of this data is currently being transcribed). Of these, 9 instances included teacher nomination and 7 were open floor sequences. In the ESL data there were 50 such sequences, 27 with teacher nomination and 23 without.

ⁱⁱⁱ The teacher's decision to provide the answer here may relate to the fact that this item had generated discussion when she attempted to take students through the exercise earlier.

^{iv} We argue this is the case particularly because the incorrect response rhymes with the correct response.

^v This is quite common in our data, where teachers either start with elicitation and then move to open floor sequences, or start with an open floor, and then move to calling on specific students.

^{vi} We discuss possible reasons for one of the few (if not the only) examples of a student speaking in overlap with the teacher in these data in our analysis of Excerpt 3.

^{vii} To put it differently, the lack of response is—in and of itself—a kind of response, suggesting to us that individual student responses are less important to the teacher than moving through the text.