Oral Use of English for Specific Purposes in Tunisian First-Year Preparatory Engineering Classrooms

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Hedia Ben Elouidhnine

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I would like to dedicate this book to my father Ezzedine.
May his departed soul rest in peace.

"It always seems impossible until it is done."
-Nelson Mandela

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AL:	Active Learning
BG:	Biology and Geology
CA:	Conversation Analysis
CBLT:	Content-Based Language Teaching
CCD:	Classroom Conversational Discourse
CCR:	Classroom-Centered Research
CCRF:	Classroom-Centered Research Frame
CE:	Conversational English
CECO:	Classroom Ecology
CF:	Conversational Floor
CI(s):	Classroom Interaction(s)
CL:	Collaborative Learning
CLS(s):	Collaborative Learning Strategie(s)
CLT:	Communicative Language Teaching
CMs:	Conversational Maxims
CO(s):	Classroom Observation(s)
CP:	Cooperative Principle
CPD:	Continuing/Continuous Professional Development
CSD:	Classroom Spoken Discourse
C-Z:	Congruence Zone
D:	Dimension
EAP:	English for Academic Purposes
EFL:	English as a Foreign Language
ELC(s):	English Language Classroom(s)
ELF:	English as Lingua Franca
ELP:	English Language Pedagogy
ELT:	English Language Teaching
ELU:	English Language Use
EM:	Ethnomethodology
ES:	Ethnography of Speaking
ESL:	English as a Second Language
ESP:	English for Specific Purposes
EST:	English for Science and Technology
F:	Female

f:	Frequency
FL:	Foreign Language
FLINT:	Foreign Language Interaction (developed by Moskowitz in 1976)
FOA:	Foreign Oral Assessment
F-t-F:	Face-to-Face
FY:	First-Year
FYPEC:	First-Year Preparatory Engineering Classroom
FYPEF:	First-Year Preparatory Engineering Field
FYPELTs:	First-Year Preparatory Engineering Language Teachers
FYPESs:	First-Year Preparatory Engineering Students
GE:	General English
GW:	Group Work
HA(s):	Hidden Agenda(s)
HOTS:	Higher-Order Thinking Skills
IA:	Interactive Analysis
IC(s):	Interactive Conversation(s)
ICA:	Interactive Conversation Analysis
ICT(s):	Information Communication Technology(-ies)
IPEIB:	*Institut Préparatoire aux Etudes d'Ingénieurs de Bizerte*
IPEIEM:	*Institut Préparatoire aux Etudes d'Ingénieurs d'EL MANAR*
IPEIM:	*Institut Préparatoire aux Etudes d'Ingénieurs de Monastir*
IPEIN:	*Institut Préparatoire aux Etudes d'Ingénieurs de Nabeul*
IPEIT:	*Institut Préparatoire aux Etudes d'Ingénieurs de Tunis*
IRE/IRF:	Initiation-Response-Evaluation/ Initiation-Response-Feedback
IWB:	Interactive White Board
JTN:	Jefferson Transcription Notation
KILA (Model):	Knowledge, Instructional, Learner, and Administrative (Model)
L2:	Second Language
LMD:	License-Masters-Doctorate
LSP:	Languages for Specific Purposes
LTP:	Language Teaching Pedagogy
LU:	Language Use
M:	Male
MENA:	Middle East- North Africa

MP:	Mathematics and Physics
MV(s):	Mental Verb(s)
NA:	Needs Analysis
NESs:	Native English Speakers
NLP:	Neuro-Linguistic Programming
NN:	Non-native
NNESs:	Non-Native English Speakers
NNESTs:	Non-Native English Speaking Teachers
NVB:	Non-Verbal Behavior
NVC:	Non-Verbal Communication
NVI:	Non-Verbal Interaction
NVIA:	Non-Verbal Interaction Analysis
OQ(s):	Open Question(s)
PC:	Physics and Chemistry
PE:	Preparatory Engineering
PEF:	Preparatory Engineering Field
PMs:	Polite Maxims
PW:	Pair Work
QQF:	Quantitative-Qualitative Frame
QS(s):	Questioning Strategie(s)
R-Z:	Resistance zone
SA(s):	Speech Act(s)
SAA:	Students as Audience
SAICs:	Students as Interactive Conversationalists
SAT:	Speech Act Theory
SB:	Social Behavior
SC(s):	Specialist Consultant(s)
SCORE:	Seating Chart Observation Record
SDM(s):	Spoken Discourse Marker(s)
SE:	Spoken English
SFL:	Systemic Functional Linguistics
SI:	Social Interaction
SIA:	Social Interaction Analysis
SIS(s):	Social Interactive Strategie(s)
SPSS:	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SRDF:	Survey Research Design Frame
S-S:	Student-Student
SSI(s):	Semi-Structured Interview(s)
SSJ:	Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson
SSQ(s):	Semi-Structured Questionnaire(s)
ST:	Student Talk

S-T:	Student-Teacher
STEM:	Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics
StI:	Strategic Interaction
SVDCT:	Selective Verbatim Data Collection Technique
T:	Technology
TA:	Teacher Amani
TBLL:	Task-Based Language Learning
TBLT:	Task-Based Language Teaching
TC:	Teacher Chokri
TCU(s):	Turn Constructional Unit(s)
TF:	Triangulation Frame
TiI:	Talk-in-Interaction
TK:	Teacher Kawther
TL:	Target Language
TM:	Teacher Mohammed
TREE(s):	Teacher-Researcher-Educator-Evaluator(s)
TRP(s):	Transition-Relevant Place(s)
T-S:	Teacher-Student
TS:	Teacher Sonia
TT:	Teacher Talk
TuT:	Turn-Taking
UCT:	University Classroom Talk
VB:	Verbal Behavior
VI:	Verbal Interaction
VIA:	Verbal Interaction Analysis
ZPD:	Zone of Proximal Development

INTRODUCTION

With the increasing accent on communicative and interactive approaches to language teaching and learning in the last decades, the exploration of interaction in *English for Specific Purposes* (ESP) education has taken on insightful dimensions. Accordingly, oral language has become one of the surest assets whereby to maintain and construct social relations. This has further been upheld through the focus on interactional patterns, moves, and acts that characterize nowadays' ESP classrooms' conversational exchanges. In the interactive approach, which has gained eminence in *Language Teaching Pedagogy* (LTP) since the 1980s, teachers, and learners have become more than ever 'engaged' via a 'contract' that is open to negotiation between interacting parties.

With the accelerated leap that has recently occurred in English language teaching and learning methods worldwide, concern has been more addressed to the way to ensure both productive teaching and active learning. Numerous studies have witnessed a surge of interest in how to establish an interactive classroom that is conducive to learning. This has drawn the attention of many Tunisian English practitioners, theorists, linguists, and pedagogists who find its implementation in the Tunisian ESP educational setting welcoming, though challenging.

The book lays emphasis on the tertiary sector, targeting the Tunisian ESP educational framework represented by the Tunisian *English Language Classroom* (ELC) pertaining to the *First-Year Preparatory Engineering Field* (FYPEF). The Tunisian *FYPE Classroom* (FYPEC) represents both the subject and the object of research. From this perspective, it is appropriate to anchor this book in what Allwright (1983) and Salmani-Nodoushan (2012) label classroom-centered research (CCR), which seeks to redefine language practitioners' roles in the teaching, learning, and research processes. The Tunisian FYPEC can provide the targeted subjects, both Tunisian *First-Year Preparatory Engineering Language Teachers* (FYPELTs) and *First-Year Preparatory Engineering Students* (FYPESs), with a frame inside which their *English Language use* (ELU) can be checked and assessed.

The book is pinpointed not only in CCR but also in classroom spoken discourse (CSD) that acknowledges teachers' and learners' ELU for communicative purposes (Behnam & Pouriran, 2009). One of its

features is *Verbal Behavior* (VB): a concept that was first coined in 1957 by Skinner who divided it into 'Mand,' 'Tact', and 'Intraverbal' (Webster, 2013). 'Manding' is asking somebody to perform a required activity. 'Tacting' is simply naming the desired objects. 'Intraverbals' are those utterances conveyed by other language forms and labeled 'Pragmatics' by Speech and Language Pathologists.

Being one of the main characteristics of CSD, VB involves the presence of a certain "interpersonal behavior in real life contexts" (Arendholz, 2011, p. 62), which can be either accepted or refuted. It follows that interpersonal communication requires the co-presence of not only *Non-Verbal Behavior* (NVB) but also *Social Behavior* (SB). VB, NVB, and SB can guide miscellaneous talk-mediated interactions. Talking is the medium through which the behaviors of teachers and learners are concretized in the real language classroom context. Only recently has heed been paid to the features of spoken discourse and their related corpora. They have been wrought by scientific and technological developments that embrace textual authenticity (Basturkmen, 2001).

The CSD, as produced and performed by Tunisian FYPELTs and FYPESs, is an important point of intersection between interaction and conversation. This intersection can direct more heedfulness and mindfulness to the flourish of a classroom discourse that goes beyond the spoken to the conversational, beyond comprehension to production, and beyond the involvement in simple talk to the more serious commitment to *Talk-in-Interaction* (TiI). To this effect, this book seeks to fuse *Interactive Analysis* with *Conversation Analysis* so as to come out with *Interactive Conversation Analysis* of ELU in the Tunisian FYPEC.

This book concentrates on ELU; more specifically, ESP use for oral assessment. For sure, speaking has newly become one of the most prevalent modes of assessment in many European countries (Joughin, 2010). For instance, in the United Kingdom and Australia, oral assessment has been employed in several fields, with regard to court hearings, health professions, and doctoral vivas. Besides, there has been a growing appeal for deeper engagement in assessment. Today, students need more than ever to go through it since:

- Universities worldwide are being called on to develop in their graduates those abilities that are central to the world of work and professional practice, a world where oral communication tends to dominate.
- Many theories of learning emphasize the importance of students' articulating their ideas, exposing their thinking to peers and teachers through speaking, and developing their ability and confidence to

> communicate in work-like environments.
> (Joughin, 2010, p. 1)

In the Tunisian FYPEF, oral assessment has been taking place formatively; that is, in-due course and as part and parcel of the ongoing learning process.

This book finds it imperative to take as its starting point the analysis of Tunisian FYPESs' needs for ELU in the shorter and longer runs. In the shorter run, Tunisian FYPESs need English for their ongoing academic assessment. In the longer run, these students are growing into future engineers who will have to disseminate their findings to a wider global community that includes both *Native English Speakers* (NESs) and *Non-Native English Speakers* (NNESs) (Labassi, 1996; Ben Elouidhnine, 2006). So the anticipated hurdle is: How can they maintain, in their future academic and professional life, a conversation in English that conveys the intended message to a wider discourse community? Will they face certain problems of communication when they interact with both NESs and NNESs?

The *Face-to-Face* (F-t-F) mode will be the lead mode in this book, which moves beyond mere linguistic applications in relation to the Tunisian FYPEC to deeper pragmatic implications that are mapped onto the overall Tunisian educational context. Depicting Tunisian FYPESs' endeavors to improve their linguistic fluency and accuracy in English will be interwoven with reflection upon the extent to which their strenuous strives are successful in helping them attain a certain degree of pragmatic proficiency. The key catalysts are *Interactive Conversations* (ICs) that could reveal in what respects *Teacher-Student* (T-S) and *Student-Student* (S-S) communicative interchanges in English are a success or a failure.

Accordingly, students will act either as *Interactive Conversationalists* (SAICs) or as *Audience* (SAA). Communication might break down fomenting "pragmatic failure" (Triki, 2013a, p. 23); consequently, it is an incentive to look for the main zones of affinity between Pragmatic research and ESP, as well as between ESP and LTP. The intersection between both *Interactive Analysis* and *Conversation Analysis* aims at shedding light on the interrelationship between *Pragmatics* and *English Language Pedagogy* (ELP).

Probing ESP use in the more specific Tunisian FYPEF entails mulling over the main catalysts that could enhance more interaction and conversation in the targeted FYPEC and simultaneously the hurdles that both Tunisian FYPELTs and FYPESs could face in this regard. This implies uncovering the basic zones of congruence or incongruence which are worth exploring on the ground that they could help draw a cogent

picture about T-S and S-S classroom dynamics, as well as the availability and authenticity of the resources used. Needless to say, Tunisia is still lagging behind the other nations at this level. The main problem lies in the implementation of strategies that might be neither far-sighted nor far-reaching.

The overall social setting of the Tunisian FYPEC could provide an appropriate ground for aligning tools to objectives. In this respect, five basic objectives can be underpinned. To begin with, there is still lack of English practice in Tunisia. There is not any sufficient exposure to it as a *Foreign Language* (FL). From this angle, it is worth finding out about the main keys to foster the use of English as *Target Language* (TL). Therefore, the targeted classrooms pertaining to the Tunisian FYPEF are among the most appropriate social settings where Tunisian FYPESs could improve their proficiency in English, in general, and *Spoken English* (SE), in particular.

Long before taking the decision to conduct the current investigation and as a teacher of English at *Institut Préparatoire aux Etudes d'Ingénieurs de Tunis* (*IPEIT*), the researcher had noted that the syllabus was excessively concentrated on the teaching of English grammar. In other words, there was a considerable spotlight on the accurate use of TL to the detriment of its fluent and appropriate use. Even evaluation, generally speaking, was much focused on the written at the expense of the spoken. Only in the last few years has the spoken channel invaded the English language curriculum and become one of the major components for student in-due course assessment. Despite these changes, there are still many lacunae.

The oral mode has so far been excluded from the final summative assessment. Its presence has been formatively-driven and with respect to oral presentations more than to other spoken genres. The stance defended by the researcher is that there is still a shortage concerning the use of ICs that could flourish into hot discussions and debates about up-to-date issues. Thus, a second motive is to draw more attention to ICs as spoken genres that are as important as oral presentations and that should be more focused upon in the targeted ELCs.

A third key objective is to increase Tunisian FYPESs' consciousness of the need to be taught *Pragmatics*, explicitly and overtly, in their ELCs. By encouraging them to talk and interact using English, they can become more knowledgeable about the main conversational practices that could help them build more affinity between *Pragmatics* and ESP as well as between ESP and their field of specialization. By the same token, what was noticeable at *IPEIT* was that many students were still

reluctant to talk in English and ignorant of *Conversational English* (CE), which has lately been gaining fame outside the Tunisian borders.

In the last decades, more heed has been paid to the *Preparatory Engineering* (PE) sector in Tunisia. Many students who come to the PE institutes are generally deemed *la crème de la crème*; that is, those who generally obtain the best scores in the baccalaureate exam and spend more than seven years learning English. In fact, several works have been carried out in relation to ESP use in the fields of physics (Ben Elouidhnine, 2006), chemistry (Labassi, 1996), etc. However, there is still a shortfall of studies targeting PE and the Tunisian FYPEF, in more particular terms. Thus, the fourth objective is to leave no stone unturned in bringing more attention to ELU in the Tunisian FYPEF.

The fifth objective is related to this book's potential contribution to improving the quality of education in Tunisia. As a matter of fact, and since the 2011 Arab revolutions, many problems have become more patent than ever before. At the Tunisian university level, these problems have been converging towards the LMD system. Standing for *License-Master-Doctorate* (MESRS, 2016) and dwelling on Europe's Bologna process of higher-education studies that range from three to five years, this system has recently been accused of causing degeneration to the quality of higher education and its impact on students' future employability. Besides, there has been an increasing discrepancy between both arenas. Daoud (2007) and Harrabi (2010a, 2010b, 2013) contend that Tunisia is still lagging behind the other countries as far as the availability of resources and materials for innovation in *English Language Teaching* (ELT) is concerned. Students, including those enrolled in the PE sector, are in the process of learning what cannot satisfy the needs of the future job market.

Accessing the labor market has become so difficult for many Tunisian graduates (OECD, 2015). As more emphasized by OECD (2015), the rate of unemployment has drastically increased among these graduates. Meanwhile, their involvement into the labor market has become for some a dream while, for others, it has turned into an urgent appeal, which reveals the patent disparity between skills and demands, hence between academic and professional requirements. In the same vein, Rose (2015) asserts that "there is a marked mismatch between labour market needs and the products of the universities, resulting in burgeoning graduate unemployment" (p. 6). The same issue is present in relation to the Tunisian ESP educational context.

Other hardships that have prompted the weakness of the LMD system converge towards the inefficient teaching standards that have been confined to a small number of institutions. Even the subjects being taught

can merely be deemed irrelevant in that they are not in step with the required courses to deliver (Marshall, 2012). It follows that the higher education system in Tunisia has to be revised, namely, the revision of the teaching quality, the learning process, skills' and subskills' distribution and assessment, students' needs, etc. These issues are at the heart of this book and its long-term objectives. With regard to the short-term objectives, they are academic, namely classroom-centered, and related to student achievement, as previously mentioned. All in all, the five objectives are basic drives for finding out about:

1. The kind of patterns carried out during T-S and S-S exchangeable English conversations.
2. The congruence between teachers' and their students' use of ESP for oral assessment.
3. The extent to which Tunisian FYPESs' and FYPELTs' perceptions of their ELC-based VB, NVB, and SB dovetail.
4. The serious implications to derive from *Interactive Conversation Analysis*'applications in the Tunisian ESP educational setting.

In this regard, the current book is composed of five chapters. The first chapter is introductory. It presents the theoretical background of the study, states its rationale, presents its objectives, and exposes its organization.

The second chapter reviews the literature that anchors the conducted work. It includes a survey of the main theories and studies underpinning *Interactive Conversation Analysis* with its two core components: *Interactive Analysis* and *Conversation Analysis*. Then, it reveals the Tunisian PE setting in which *Interactive Conversation Analysis* is applied. This encompasses the exploration of not only ESP use for oral assessment but also the main applications and implications that could be of equal importance in this regard.

The third chapter is based on the analysis of the findings obtained from the ethical conduct of the research instruments selected for data collection (CO, SSQ, and SSI). It is carried out both qualitatively and quantitatively for validation purposes. Figures and tables as well as numbers and percentages are used to enrich the statistical analysis, and communicate the targeted results.

The fourth chapter is concerned with the interpretation and discussion of the obtained findings while answering the questions posed in the introduction. It allows the justification of the approach followed and

the evaluation of the current work in relation to previous research. Thus, it offers insights whereby to relate back to the literature review.

The fifth chapter sums up the main results gleaned. It provides some recommendations, and suggestions for future research. Attempting to be neither too negative nor extremely modest vis-à-vis the current research-based achievements, two sections are inserted: one unveiling its main limitations and another praising its major contributions.

CHAPTER 1

APPROACHING INTERACTIVE CONVERSATION ANALYSIS IN THE TUNISIAN FYPEC

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to set up the theoretical background of *Interactive Conversation Analysis* (ICA) by shedding light on its two merged components: *Interactive Analysis* and *Conversation Analysis*. Then, it approaches *Interactive Conversation Analysis*' applicability in the Tunisian FYPEC by presenting ESP use for oral assessment, as well as the main theoretical underpinnings that could pave the way for advancing crucial applications and implications in relation to the Tunisian PE setting.

1.1. Approaching ICA

This part begins with the presentation of *Interactive Analysis,* then moves to the depiction of *Conversation Analysis*. Both types of analysis are mingled into ICA.

1.1.1. Interactive Analysis (IA)

Within this framework, attention is paid to the interactive approach to language and language learning and to the classroom interaction in which *university classroom talk* can nourish and flourish. Then, heed is given to *Verbal Interaction Analysis*, *Non-Verbal Interaction Analysis*, and *Social Interaction Analysis*.

1.1.1.1. The interactive approach to language and language learning

Formerly, language was viewed as a structure-related element serving meaning coding and decoding while language learning gave priority to the mastery of the lexico-grammatical elements and their amalgam into a complete system. Both views of language and language