

Understanding Interaction in the Second Language Classroom Context. Noriko Iwashita, Phung Dao, Mai Xuan Nhat Chi Nguyen. *Multilingual Matters*, 2025, 220 pp.

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Early this summer, I met an ex-student. Before we parted ways, she told me that I might be interested to know that she was still good friends with her classmates from my class. She said that they had travelled together and had created an online group to support each other while they were studying abroad. I heartily thanked her for the follow-up, explaining how I have been researching community building in the classroom, and then, with my interest piqued, I explored how her friendships had evolved in my class. Her story allowed me to consider the cognitive-interactionist perspective, the sociocultural aspects, and the language socialization perspectives evident in the classmates' interactions. My on-the-spot analysis of what I was hearing stemmed from the practical application of these perspectives as taught in *Understanding Interaction in the Second Language Classroom Context* (Iwashita et al., 2025). In this insightful book, the authors acknowledge that for many years their own classroom interactions as teachers were not as inclusive or effective as they had hoped. They also illustrate how instructions that focus heavily on memorization due to assessment demands can restrict diverse students' learning experiences by being unsuitable for communicative tasks (p.163). As a result, for themselves and for teachers grappling with challenges in classroom interactions, Iwashita and her co-authors have brought together the experiences of educators from varied cultural contexts to attempt to address equity in classroom communities. Focusing on the three perspectives outlined above, this volume offers a comprehensive examination of interaction in diverse L2 classrooms such as in Japan, Korea and Vietnam. It emphasizes inclusivity as a cornerstone of effective communication, outlines challenges educators face, and presents evidence-based strategies for equity in teaching.

The book is divided into 12 chapters that blend feasible, interactive guidance such as reflective prompts and classroom activity examples with theoretical insights, making it accessible for both novice and experienced practitioners. Topics include teacher-student interaction, peer interaction, culturally responsive pedagogy, technology-based interactions, and how educational policy shapes classroom dynamics. The authors weigh the cognitive-interactionist perspective, which focuses on how conversational interaction promotes L2 processing and learning, against the sociocultural approach that explains how cognitive development is embedded within social interaction, and the

language socialization perspective, which highlights how learners simultaneously acquire linguistic forms and cultural practices, through participation in communicative activities. For example, the authors make note of language socialization theory with the use of the first language (L1) in second language (L2) classrooms, explaining "...exclusive use of the target language could be argued against because it ignores learners' identity. That is, learners' identity is closely associated with language learning... Therefore, not being able to use their L1 may lead to a denial of learner identity" (p. 120). The authors contrast this idea with a cognitive-interactionist viewpoint, noting that heavy reliance on L1 may limit opportunities for input and feedback. However, they then add that from a sociocultural perspective, L1-use "...facilitates learners to maintain their focus and interests and to complete tasks which they may not be able to do if they use the L2 exclusively" (p. 128). By presenting these tensions, the book encourages teachers to strike a balance that supports both learner identity and L2 development.

As a neurodiverse reader, I appreciated the attempt at a structured format of the text. The text is clearly organized, with reflection questions that are particularly helpful for both my own teaching and professional development. Interactive elements, such as scripts, are given to support the visualization of the scenarios. The use of case studies and consistent presentation of key terms aids comprehension, while succinct conclusions at the end of each chapter clarified the complex theory.

Specifically relevant for GALE readers, chapter 11, "Language Socialization and Ethnography in the L2 Classroom," highlights how authority and routines establish politeness norms, socialize learners into respectful roles, and reinforce classroom hierarchies, as seen with the example given of a Vietnamese English class standing in unison to greet their teacher in chorus, and waiting for permission to sit. This demonstrates how interaction not only teaches language but also inducts learners into cultural values around respect and behaviour- which may often be gendered. The book offers a detailed discussion of language socialization, and as the authors explain, socialization includes both linguistic and cultural dimensions, and that "...language socialization refers to the linguistic and interactional processes that mediate L2 learners' participation in routine cultural practices... facilitating the development of linguistic, cultural, and communicative competence as well as the establishment of membership in diverse discourse communities" (p. 146). Key issues considered are authority and power, examining how classroom roles reflect broader hierarchies and gendered expectations reinforced through routines and ideology, how beliefs about authority and respect shape interaction norms. Additional topics include indexicality, where language forms such as honorifics mark not only social roles but also gender roles; participation frameworks, which influence how students learn when and how to speak, and communicative practices, such as turn-

taking and strategies for agreeing or disagreeing, which shape learners' identities as legitimate classroom members.

A potential weakness in the book lies in how sparingly visuals are used. Incorporating more infographics and charts could help distill complex concepts and relationships into easily digestible formats, making the theoretical frameworks more accessible to readers like myself, and would further support diverse learning styles and assist in understanding how various theories interconnect.

Understanding Interaction in the Second Language Classroom Context underscores that interaction is central to both language acquisition and socialization. Classroom interaction is, therefore, not simply instructional but intrinsic to students' identities and roles within new communities. As an educator working with culturally and linguistically diverse learners in Japan, this takeaway that everyday classroom exchanges construct power, gender, and identity resonated with me. The issues brought up reflect the challenges I encounter when helping students navigate differing expectations of respect and participation, showing how small exchanges can carry sociocultural weight. The book, offering accessible strategies supported by theory and data, makes a strong case for integrating linguistic and sociocultural development into the classroom. By doing so, it contributes meaningfully to discussions of language diversity, social justice, and equity in education, which aligns closely with GALE's mission to support inclusive teaching and equity in professional practice.

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