

Developing Students' Oral Interaction Competence Using Conversation Analytic Tools

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Article information

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the development of students' engagement in oral interactions using conversation analysis (CA, hereafter) tools. A qualitative design of a CA approach was used to understand the role of conversation analysis. Here, CA was used both as a data gathering tool and an analysis technique. Oral tasks were provided to 15 participants of the study prior to the intervention. The participants were taught conversational features using CA-based treatment to develop their knowledge and skills regarding oral interactions in English for four consecutive months. Their oral productions were recorded and analyzed using a CA transcription convention to identify students' difficulties in engaging in oral interactions. In the post-intervention phase of the study, oral productions of the participants were also recorded using audio/video devices and analyzed from the CA perspective. The findings showed that the participants exhibited improvements in their engagement in oral interactions. An increased use of conversational strategies and repairs in the post-intervention phase of the study is evidence of the development of their engagement in oral interactions. The participants also developed knowledge of the use of spoken grammar in oral interactions. Therefore, a CA-based treatment seems to have significant implications for the teaching of oral English skills.

Keywords	oral interaction, oral interaction competence, conversation analysis
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1. Background

Currently, the importance of being good at oral communication is highly recognized. Having high English oral communication ability, in particular, is a key concern for many (Saeed, 2013), and communicative competence in the target language (English in this regard) is more sought after now than ever before due to increased opportunities for its speakers. The global demand for English has led to a major increase in the need for appropriate language teaching and language teaching resources (Richards, 2006), which in turn has placed considerably more responsibility on English language teachers, as there is a positive relationship between real life communicative purposes and language learning approaches (Saeed, 2013).

Ansarey (2012) has observed that speakers having less than average oral skills may have difficulties in a variety of communicative situations such as personal, social or business-related. In such situations, a speaker is required to have good command of oral language skills and enough confidence to speak in the presence of others, leading to effective communication. In this regard, Donato (2000) notes that strong ability to communicate orally enables a person to better express his thoughts and ideas; therefore, learners should be explicitly taught the machinery of conversation to help them further develop their oral skills.

These days, new developments have been observed in the areas of language pedagogy to promote the oral interactional competence of second language learners using conversation analysis (CA)-informed instructions (Barraja-Rohan, 2011). Barraja-Rohan, in her empirical findings on using the CA approach as a tool, emphasizes that CA is a helpful instrument for addressing problems of language teaching and learning. Conversation analysis is one of the key methodological approaches to the study of verbal interaction (Wooffitt, 2005: 1). Similarly, Wong and Waring (2010) emphasize the incorporation of CA in the language pedagogy because it is a foundation to all language learning. Applying conversation analysis findings in the classroom addresses the issue of oversimplification in speech act

instructional materials (Nicholas, 2015). Lee and Hellermann (2014) claim that, currently, CA researchers have addressed the developmental agenda by investigating related data over time in the process of teaching. They further argue that CA has taken a different analytic method, and CA's extensive body of findings as regards L2 English has mostly been descriptive in nature, primarily focusing on the practices of L2 use in the sequential production of turns and associated actions. Moreover, Wooffitt (2005) believes that conversation analysis offers the most sophisticated and robust account of language in action. Since second language teaching and learning requires interaction or language in action, CA is believed to promote EFL classroom interaction. CA, as an approach, is rigorously empirical in that it works on real interactions (Walsh, 2006). Global experiences call for a need to use evidence-based instruction for the effective teaching of oral skills such as conversational skills. CA for second language acquisition asserts to seek the relevance of learning through the actions of parties in each context of use because the learning processes are constructed through the talk of the participants; that is, learning takes place through interaction (Lee & Hellermann, 2014).

Conversation analysis (CA) is valuable for second language learning as it focuses on the analysis of naturally occurring conversations to understand the structure and organization of interactions in real-life situations (Hall, 2019). According to several scholars such as Sidnell (2010), Baraja-Rohan (2011), and Deppermann and Doehler (2021), CA can be applied to second language learning in the following ways:

1. Identifying conversational patterns: CA helps learners observe and analyze typical conversational patterns, such as turn-taking, repair strategies, preference organization, and the use of various interactional devices. This allows learners to gain insights into how conversations are structured and how speakers interact with each other.

2. Understanding pragmatic norms: CA helps learners understand the pragmatic norms and rules that guide conversational interactions in the target language.

3. Developing conversational skills: By analyzing authentic conversations, learners can gain exposure to natural language use and learn to produce and respond to language in a more authentic and contextually appropriate manner. CA helps learners become aware of the unspoken rules and practices in conversation, enabling them to engage in more meaningful and effective interactions.

4. Analyzing and practicing repair strategies: CA allows learners to analyze and practice repair strategies used in conversations when misunderstandings or breakdowns occur. By studying how native speakers repair communication gaps, learners can develop their own strategies for clarifying their messages or understanding others.

5. Focusing on interactional competence: CA helps learners develop interactional competence; learners can improve their ability to engage in meaningful and reciprocal communication. It provides learners with a deeper understanding of the dynamics of conversation, allowing them to develop their communicative skills in a more authentic and contextually appropriate manner. This helps them develop their pragmalinguistic competence, which refers to the ability to use language appropriately in various communicative contexts (Hall, 2019; Yan, 2022). It involves the knowledge of linguistic rules, such as grammar and vocabulary, and how to apply them effectively in communication. Therefore, CA-based instruction plays a significant role in analyzing and identifying learners' gaps and indicate the necessary instructional features to be taught to fill those identified gaps.

Having given a brief account of the contribution of the CA analytic tool for language acquisition, the present study, therefore, aimed to explore the role of CA-

informed instruction in developing students' oral interaction ability, as most EFL students, in the present context, were observed as being unable to interact effectively in English classes due to the fact that there was little focus on the conversational features needed for oral interaction. English language teaching, especially the teaching of oral skills, is often hampered by factors such as the linguistic incompetence of students and teachers, the teachers' knowledge and application of teaching methodologies, and the curriculum used. As an example, generally speaking, the teaching of English is suffering in Ethiopia as teachers are unaware of and unfamiliar with appropriate English language teaching methods, and the absence of effective methods in their teaching (Kumar Jha, 2013). Kumar Jha points out that the practice of a learner-centered approach is lacking; the teachers do not encourage learners in a quest for self-learning activities and the course components do not favor cooperative learning. Thus, English is learned, not mastered, in Ethiopia as confirmed by Kumar Jha's study. Although Ethiopia's need for the English language is more intensified in the era of globalization, the discouraging picture of English language teaching in the country has not improved (Eshetie, 2010). Emphasizing global trends, Dörnyie and Thurrell (1994) argue that learners face problems of oral communication because they are not taught the conversational features which enable them to become competent communicators. Similarly, in a preliminary study conducted by the present researcher, participants struggled while performing oral tasks in English classes. Although some of them made great efforts to interact, they took a long time to communicate their meaning orally as they lacked the necessary knowledge and skills to engage in successful oral interactions. They did not use repairs and conversational strategies to fill gaps or overcome communication breakdowns. Such being the case, the current study attempted to investigate whether or not CA-informed instruction, defined as an instruction guided by conversation analysis of learners' oral productions and reduces their difficulties through explicit teaching using necessary materials, would help develop EFL students' oral interaction competence in a variety of situations. Specifically, the present study aimed to seek answers to the following research questions:

1. Does CA-informed instruction promote learners' use of conversational features in oral interaction?
2. Does CA-informed treatment develops learners' pragmalinguistic competence?
3. Does CA-informed treatment promote the oral interaction ability of learners?

2. Literature Review

There are a variety of discourse approaches used to study oral interactions, among which CA is one of the most prominent. Basically, CA is a methodology for the analysis of naturally-occurring spoken interaction (Seedhouse, 2005; Masats, 2017). The definition has been expanded to include other areas of study such as applied linguistics. Teng and Sinwongsuwat (2015) explain that CA focuses on interactions accomplished by means of talk, while Deppermann and Doehler (2021) argue that the empirical analysis of the micro-level organization of social interaction, which is the hallmark of CA, can elucidate the fine-grained situated interactional infrastructure that provides for the larger-scale of social dynamics in communication. Moreover, Sidnell (2010) explicates that CA attempts to show how participants analyze and interpret one another's talk in an interaction and generates a shared understanding of the interaction, and Wong and Waring (2010) maintain that conversation analysts step inside the shoes of interactants to make sense of their talk and actions. Also, Hutchy and Wooffitt (1998) and Masats (2017) point out that conversational analysis is generally conducted with the aim to unearth how participants co-construct in their turns at talk, with a central focus on how sequences of actions are generated. This also applies for classroom communication. Gordon (2004) and Duran and Sert (2019) elucidate that CA is one of several approaches to the study of spoken language in which talk-in-interaction has become an object of CA research. CA studies the organization and order of social action in interaction. According to Psathas (1995), this organization and order is one produced by the participants in talk-in-interaction and oriented to by them; it can thus only be understood from the participants' perspective. Schegloff (1986) states that it is understood as an incident when people perform their social interactions. Therefore, talk is a multifaceted task where linguistic and other non-

verbal features and visual semiotic systems, thinking, and sociality work together (Gordon, 2004).

Wong and Waring (2010) define turn-taking, which is the building block of CA, as a participant's contribution to a talk-in-interaction. It is one of the key structural units of conversation and having knowledge of it and its constituents is indispensable for successful oral interaction (Dörnyie & Thurrell, 1994; Waring, 2019). Ten Have (2007) and Deppermann and Doehler (2021) further explain that the idea of turn-taking as an organized activity is one of the pillars of CA research and the essential machinery of conversation. In every interaction, there exist rules and practices that structure turn-taking—who can speak when, how long they can speak for, and what they can say (Gorjian & Habibi 2015). Psasha (1995) states that participants in interactions have been shown to orient to these rules in interactions and in a variety of contexts. Speakers contribute mainly one at a time, speaker change occurs quite smoothly, overlapped speech is short, and transitions occur from one turn to the next with very little gap and no overlapped speech (Seedhouse, 2004; Psathas, 1995; Sacks et al., 1974).

Turn-taking is an important component without which conversation is unthinkable. Gorjian and Habibi (2015) and Duran and Sert (2021) argue that rich turn-taking is an available feature of interaction and a turn is a vital factor within conversation strategies which is associated with a speaker, or someone who produces some sort of utterance or speech act directed towards an audience of one or more people. Turn acquisition determines the kind of action(s) the next speaker(s) can or should take when it is his/her turn (Elbers & Prengers, 2006; Li Feng, 2019).

Taken in the pedagogical context, in every situation, the interaction involves participants analyzing pedagogical focus and producing utterances in the L2 which display their analysis of and socio-cultural orientations to this focus in relation to the interaction (Thornbury, 2006; Seedhouse, 2005; Barraja-Rohan, 2011; Waring,

2019; Li Feng, 2019). Other participants in the interaction analyze these turns in relation to the pedagogical focus and produce further chances for utterances in the L2, which shows this analysis. Therefore, participants continually display to each other their analyses of the evolving relationship between pedagogy and chances of speaking in interaction.

Turn design, which is a building block of a turn, has also been a contemporary focus of CA, particularly the features of grammar or how a turn constructional unit is put together (Gardner 2004; Hutchby, 2019). The unit of talk (or the turn constructional unit) is considered to be a word, a phrase, a clause, or a sentence (Sacks et al., 1974). According to Gordon (2004), the issue is to demonstrate how certain constructions are chosen to achieve particular actions and how these choices are motivated by local interactional situations. Gardner (2004) clarifies that the complex relationship between the form of a turn and the action it is designed to result in is vitally important. A study of grammar used in talk can help better understand the relationship between the grammatical resources available in a language, such as the many options or ways to ask a question and the sequential position of an action, whether this is a single question, the first in a series of questions, or a later one in a series of questions (Gordon, 2004).

As turn constructional units are the building blocks of turns, adjacency pairs or pairs of sequential utterances in interaction which are made up of two or more utterances are the most important components of conversation. The interactional sequences are context dependent and context renewing (Masats, 2017; Waring, 2019) where the second utterance depends on the first. Interactional sequences should be interrelated to create coherence in a conversation (Wong & Waring, 2010; Hutchby, 2019).

The sequence of utterances forms a structure (Shegloff, 2007; Waring, 2019). The ways conversationalists link utterances to each other as a coherent

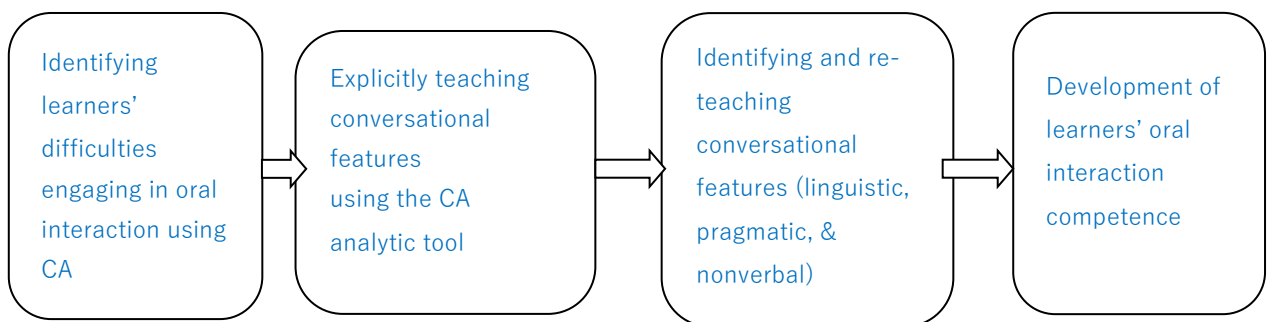
series of interrelated communicative actions is called sequence organization (Mazeland, 2006; Eskildsen, 2022). A sequence is an ordered series of utterances through which participants accomplish and coordinate an interactional activity (Schegloff, 2007; Kim, 2020). A question followed by an answer is an example of a sequence. Other examples are a request and the decision that is made about it, information and its receipt, and a criticism and the reply to it. All these different types of two-part sequences are instances of a very tight type of sequence organization: the adjacency pair (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973; Barrajan-Rohan, 2011, Kim, 2020). When a recipient of a turn in conversation hears the speaker's utterance as the first part of a particular type of adjacency pair, the appropriate thing to do next is to deliver an utterance that may count as the second part of the same pair. As an illustration, the appropriate reaction to a question is to answer it. The question is treated as the first pair part of a question/answer pair; the answer is its second part. A question tends to be followed by an answer, a greeting by a greeting, an offer by an acceptance or a rejection, and this basic pairing of actions in conversation has led to the notion of adjacency pairs. There are, however, constraints on these pairings; thus, questions take answers, greetings take return greetings, and requests take acceptances or rejects. A way of expressing these constraints is to say that a first pair part is sequentially implicative of a second pair part. In order to equip learners with this machinery or tool of oral communication, a CA-informed instruction is important.

The basic rules for the production of expressions in conversation were formulated early in the history of CA (Gordon, 2004). Given the recognizable production of a first pair part, at its first possible completion its speaker should stop, then the next speaker should start and produce a second pair part of the same pair type (Gordon, 2004; Barrajan-Rohan, 2011; Hutchby, 2019); thus, adjacency pairs are composed of two expressions by different speakers, and speakers orient to them being placed adjacently. Hence, based on the literature reviewed above, CA-informed intervention plays a significant role in promoting the conversational skills of English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners, thereby

facilitating the acquisition of the target language (Markee, 2000; Duran & Sert, 2019). The issue of producing successive utterances is important in order for learners to master the target language in their effort to hold successful oral interaction to achieve a certain communicative purpose. Thus, this study focused on the development of these skills in which being good at conversation presupposes the engagement of learners in oral interactions of different types in various situations. Based on the theoretical discussions, the following conceptual framework is drawn.

Figure 1

The Conceptual Framework for the Development of Learners' Oral Interaction Competence



3. Methodology

3.1 Study Design

CA, in the study, was used as a methodology, data collection tool, and method of data analysis. This design enabled the researcher to obtain baseline information, identify the kind of teaching materials necessary to lessen learners' difficulties, and carry out a pertinent intervention to fill out gaps being informed by CA. CA, as a qualitative approach, helps uncover problems of oral interactions as confirmed by a body of research (Sidnell, 2010; Seedhouse, 2011).

3.2 Participants

The purpose of this study was to develop the engagement of the study participants in oral interaction using CA as an analytic tool. The participants of the

study were second-year English Language and Literature students at Bahir Dar University. The purpose of selecting these students was that they were expected to carry out conversational activities in their field. Since the field required the graduates to be orally proficient in English, it was believed that an intervention was required to develop the oral interaction abilities of students to help them become more competent in different work environments. Different companies such as airlines, corporations, media institutions, public relations firms, communication affairs offices, tourism agencies, and so forth are potential employers of English language graduates. Therefore, the graduates are required to be competent in all forms of oral tasks and interactions.

All second-year students of the English Language and Literature Department were included in the study. The total number of study participants was 20, 15 of whom completed the training during four months in the year 2021. The students who did not complete the training did so because either they joined the English Language Improvement Center but were excluded for the sake of avoiding data contamination, or they attended the training infrequently.

3.3 Data Gathering Instruments

Oral productions of participants were recorded using audio/video devices in the pre- and post-intervention stages of the study. The pre-intervention oral task analyses were used to indicate the prevailing gaps prior to the treatment, and post-intervention oral task analyses were used to show the improvement as a result of the CA-based intervention. The recorded oral interactions were examined using the CA perspective. In other words, while the pre-intervention oral task analyses were made to identify the problems participants faced, the post-intervention oral analyses were employed to determine the effect of the CA-informed intervention. Generally, oral task analyses were made before and after the intervention. A description of each task performance together with the actual verbal outputs was presented. Based on the CA model, analyses and interpretations of the oral interaction performances of each pair of participants were made.

3.4 Intervention and Data Collection Data Gathering Instruments

Since the present study aimed at developing interactional skills of student participants, different procedures which were assumed to be crucial for enabling participants to be competent English oral language users were employed. In general, language learners are expected to understand and know how a range of oral language texts operates in different contexts (PDST, 2014). Therefore, language teachers need to establish classroom structures and procedures that allow them to develop their understanding of the different forms that oral language texts take and provide opportunities for learners to purposefully practice these forms in a variety of settings. Below is a description of the procedures that were employed in the present study.

In the pre-intervention stage of the study, participants were provided with different scenarios in which they performed tasks without the intervention of the researcher. The oral practices participants performed were believed to enable the researcher to get opportunities to observe and understand their difficulties. This in turn provided the researcher with information about the gaps participants had in relation to features of oral communication in English which is considered to be an important step in CA-informed pedagogy or language teaching (Barraja-Rohan, 2011). During this pre-intervention phase, participants' practice of conversations allowed the researcher to examine in detail how they interacted without intervention. As participants were performing the oral tasks, the researcher recorded them having a conversation in dyads or triads. The conversations were then analyzed using the CA transcription convention, referred to as pre-instruction conversations or pre-intervention instructions. In doing so, oral tasks with different scenarios were given to participants. Thus, before the intervention took place, conversation analysis was done to find the gaps because the main tool to show the gaps in the use of conversation features (Markee, 2008) and awareness of the language form and function is generally conversation analysis or a conversation analytic tool.

In the second phase, study participants were exposed to five audio and 20 video recordings of native and native-like conversations. They were told to pay particular attention to the conversational features as they were listening and watching the audio and video materials. According to Seedhouse (2005), native speakers' conversations are authentic and natural (Seedhouse, 2005), thus giving learners opportunities to be exposed to authentic or real-life conversations (Barraja-Rohan, 2011). In this study, more than 50 audio-video samples were collected, of which five audio and 20 video recordings were selected to help participants focus on the conversational features in the English language. The audio-video teaching materials were appropriate for the standards of study participants for the following reasons. First, they were prepared for English language learners. Second, these audio-video materials were taken from Cambridge English, British English for Language Assessment, and YouTube. Third, two English language professors participated in the selection of the audio-video recordings to ensure validity. Fourth, the materials were piloted before they were used for teaching participants of the present study.

Thirdly, having watched the native speaker's audio-video conversations, participants were then provided with scenarios. The oral tasks were used to see to what extent they had understood the language use and conversational features. They were able to listen to the audio-video recordings as many times as possible to fill out the gaps in the exercises. Then videos containing the conversations were played to help them verify their answers to the missing structures. Following this, participants were provided with different scenarios to practice conversations. Their engagement in conversational practice helped the researcher identify the gaps they had so that further actions could be taken.

Following their exposure to the audio-video conversations, participants practiced different conversational activities, and the researcher recorded, transcribed, described and analyzed their conversations.

After that, a follow-up was conducted in order to ensure the progress of participants in their oral competence. This was done through conversation analysis of participants' speech which was purposively recorded. An attempt was made to check their progress and their responses to the CA approach. This was achieved by recording participants having conversations with their peers (in pairs and triads) during the intervention.

Then, again, participants were asked to perform scenarios using authentic conversations that involved questions and answers and telephoning on topics such as personal likes and dislikes and the weather. To improve the CA-based conversation activities, the researcher initially recorded the conversation classes and used, as mentioned above, classroom observations to reflect on the lessons taught. This stage of the intervention called for further involvement of participants in different activities, and their oral productions and interventions were analyzed using the CA-analytic tool. It was believed that this stage was helpful in identifying individual differences in oral performance of student participants.

What's more, after different tasks had been performed by participants, the researcher clearly identified the gaps that they had in their oral interactions using conversation analysis. According to Huth (2011) and Duran and Sert (2019), conversation analysis is an analytic tool that is commonly used in an attempt to gather evidence of language learners' oral interaction. After the gaps had been identified, additional materials thought to be useful for development of conversation skills were used to bridge the gaps. The interactional features that needed to be taught were identified and incorporated into the materials prepared for this particular purpose based on the information gained from conversation analytic tools.

The study participants continued practicing different activities prepared for the intervention purpose in the next stage. They received feedback from the teacher and their peers which was helpful for them as they could learn from each

other's feedback on how conversation worked. As Psathas (1995) and Duran and Sert (2019) have pointed out, CA is helpful for the understanding of how conversation is organized and how interactants understand and display understanding of each other as their talk unfolds.

Moreover, after feedback was given to participants, task-based activities were used to help them further develop oral interactional ability to the level of effective oral communication in English language and increase their knowledge of the language forms and functions used for questions and answers in requests, asking and giving directions, and invitations.

Finally, in the post-intervention stage of the study, participants performed oral tasks of their own choice. They were given the freedom to select their own conversational partners and topics as no instructions were given in order to create a relaxed atmosphere. The recorded conversations were then analyzed using the CA approach and the effects of CA-informed instruction were examined.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data collected through audio-video devices were analyzed from the CA perspective / CA transcription convention. In this regard, Wong and Waring's (2010) CA framework was employed in the analysis. As per Wong and Waring, the framework of CA is based on turn-taking and related language productions or utterance called turn-design, sequential production of related pair of utterances in a conversation (adjacency pairs), and repairs/conversational strategies. The thoughts of several CA specialists such as Ten Have (2007), Sidnell (2010), and Seedhouse (2005) were used to analyze the data collected through audio-video recordings to uncover the gaps in oral interactions of study participants. In the analysis, the quality changes (if any) in the oral task performances of participants as a result of the CA-based intervention were examined. The focus of the analyses was on participants' oral interactions including conversational structures, turn-

taking, use of appropriate pairs of utterances, conversational strategies/repairs, and use of appropriate spoken grammar.

3.6 Data transcriptions conventions

In this study, transcription notations deemed useful for this study were used. It is worth noting that abbreviations were used instead of names to keep the anonymity of study participants due to ethical issues. According to Ten Have (2007), a list of transcript symbols is meant to make clear the major conventions for rendering details of the vocal production of utterances in talk-in interaction as these are used in most current CA publications (see Appendix).

4. Findings

4.1 The Pre-Intervention Oral Task Analyses

Before the intervention was carried out, pre-intervention activities were provided for students and the oral productions of participants were recorded and analyzed to make the intervention evidence-based. This process helped identify oral interaction related gaps that participants had and to develop pertinent treatment. The presentation and the analyses of the pre-intervention results are presented with sample transcripts of audio-video recordings of participants. The following sample excerpts were taken from different types of scenarios. Participants held oral interactions based on their choice of scenarios and the topics of the conversations were on question and answer and telephoning.

Excerpt I: Conversation on question and answer

1. Azm: How are you ((shaking hand))
2. Merk: How are you. where where are you gone?
3. Azm: I'm going to (())
4. Merk: How how going: to: there?
5. Azm: (())
6. Merk: How long is it: take?
7. Azm: I planned to stay for (())

8. Merk: Ok:: have you-have you-okk another have you another (2 s) la:rning program?
9. Azm: Yes. I planned to go to Dubai this summer ((to use my language))
10. Merk: For peace bye.
11. Azm: I've program ((shaking hands)) ((noisy))

The participants of the conversation in this scenario opened their conversation using '*How are you-How are you*' adjacency pair parts accompanied by hand shaking. The second pair part uttered by Merk was used to develop the conversation although the utterance she produced was not grammatically correct. She also repeated the word '*where*' in the same utterance. Actually, Merk did this in the different turn constructional units of the conversation as vividly seen in the excerpt, whereas Azm's turn constructional units have inaudible portions in different utterances. Moreover, Merk used stretched words which show her lack of linguistic competence. She used the stretched words to gain time to think what to say next. Although this was understood as a conversation strategy to fill gaps, its repeated use made the conversation awkward and affected her fluency.

When the conversation was brought to an end, the conversants did not use pre-closing and terminal closing utterances. This closing of the conversation did not go with the norms of the target language. It was an abrupt closing and was made only by handshaking.

Excerpt II: Telephone conversation

One of the sample excerpts of the pre-intervention phase of the study was on telephone conversation with the objective to see participants' English conversational skills. In sample excerpt II below, Rab and Tar conducted their telephone conversation, and based on their conversation, analysis was made. This sample excerpt is used for illustration.

1. Ringing
2. Rab: Listening
3. Tar: How are you? This is Tar.

4. Rab: (12s) ((bending her face as a sign of shyness and signaling her partner to restart
5. the call)). Hello Tar. This is Rab.
6. Tar: How are you this is Tar.
7. Rab: How are you:
8. Tar: I'm fine:
9. Rab: A'm-I-I forget you-I forget you I-forget you-I forget you:r-you-you: homework:: tell me to page.
10. Tar: Yes: it is page on ((lege, stuttering)) ((general))
11. Rab: Thank you:
12. Tar: No matter. Goodbye.
13. Rab: Goodbye ((quieter than the surroundings))

This conversation was opened by a telephone ringing (summons) followed by the response given by Rab using the expression '*listening*' which is unusual in English. Then came the '*How are you*' greeting and the self-identification: '*I'm Tar*' turn constructional unit (expression). Pausing for 12 seconds and turning her face to the other side of hers (as a sign of shyness), Rab signaled her partner to restart the conversation and said 'Hello Tar this is Rab.' At the identification and recognition stage, Tar greeted Rab with '*How are you this is Tar,*' repeating what she said before they restarted the conversation (line 3). As part of the opening the '*How are you-I'm fine*' continued.

Rab asked a direct question using a repeated utterance in an awkward manner as indicated in lines 9 and 10 of the conversation. Although the response (the adjacency pair) seemed to be appropriate to the question asked, the expression used to respond to the question lacked clarity because it was not done using clear language and appropriate language use. Even the page number she was referring to was not clearly indicated.

Lastly, '*thank-no matter*' adjacency pair parts were used as a pre-closing expression followed by the terminal closing adjacency pair parts of '*Goodbye-Goodbye.*'

The pre-intervention analyses of the oral productions of study participants showed that the participants of the study had problems in their conversational skills. They used undesired repetitions, produced inaudible utterances, failed to use appropriate conversational strategies or repairs, and failed to use spoken grammar and vocabulary which they needed to express their thoughts. The fluency of their conversation was also highly affected.

4.2 The Post-Intervention Conversation Analysis

After the intervention was conducted, study participants were provided with oral tasks and asked to perform the tasks. The post-intervention conversations were used to show the qualitative changes achieved as a result of the CA-based treatment. While these kinds of tasks were chosen and performed by the study participants themselves, it allowed the researcher to observe the changes they exhibited. The analyses of the sample excerpts of their conversations are presented below.

Excerpt III: Conversation on likes and dislikes

The excerpt of the topic here was music preference, so in excerpt III, Merk and Azm discussed the music they liked. Based on their conversation, the conversational features and their language performances were analyzed using the CA transcription convention.

Music preference

1. Merk: Hi. How are you?
2. Azm: I'm fine thanks to God. What are you doing?
3. Merk: I'm listening to Ephrem's music.
4. Azm: Oh:: my goodness! I w'd love to.
5. Merk: You love him?
6. Azm: I'm crazy about him. I'm his admirer.

7. Merk: What about other musicians?
8. Azm: Well, I like all musicians, especially the oldies.
9. For example, Tilahun and Bizunesh.
10. Merk: Tilahun and Bizunesh? They are famous. Aren't they?
11. Azm: Yes. They produced their music in the last years.
12. Merk: You listen to their music?
13. Azm: Ok. I listened to their their most of music.
14. Merk: Oh. Good.
15. Azm: Ok. What about you? You appreciate them?
16. Merk: Em... I also like to listen to some other oldies.
17. Azm: Yea. Oldies are our favorite singers. I like all of them.
18. Merk: ((Nodded her head as a sign of confirmation and back channeling))
19. Azm: Thank you. See you some other time.
20. Merk: Bye.
21. Azm: Bye.

The conversation began with the '*Hi. How are you? -I'm thanks to God*' expressions in which Azm developed the topic of the conversation by asking what Merk was doing. Her utterance was fully heard following Merk's response to her question. Azm's expression of '*Oh: my goodness. I'd love to*' was an indication of the development of authentic conversation. Merk's question also showed similar development because she used spoken grammar to ask her question: '*you love him?*' instead of 'Do you love him' which had the feature of written grammar. Azm responded here again using spoken grammar (line 6): '*I'm crazy about him. I'm his admirer.*' Azm produced an appropriate utterance and the part of her utterance was also audible.

The questions and answers in their conversation expanded their conversation. Their conversation was characterized by the use of non-verbal signs such as nodding their head as a sign of confirmation and a back channel which were features of oral interaction.

The *'thank you'* and *'see you some other time'* were used as pre-closing signals followed by the closing expressions of *'bye-bye.'* The closing part of their conversation was good, but it seemed to be done in a bit of a hurried manner in the pre-closing part of it. In the pre-closing part, one of them should have provided a reason for leaving (rushing for class, etc.) which could be used as an initiation for closing their conversation.

Excerpt IV: Food preference

As can be seen from the following transcript (excerpt IV), the participants (Rab and Tar) shared the food culture in their respective vicinity.

1. Rab: Hi Tar:
2. Tar: Hi Rab. I'm fine. How are you?
3. Rab: I'm fine. Where you come from?
4. Tar: I come from around Adama. eh: near Adama, what about you?
5. Rab: eh: I come from...from Gondar.
6. Tar: Ok: what kinds of food are common in Gondar?
7. Rab: In Gondar::food: Not different from other places. What kind of: food in Adama?
8. Tar: Ok: some kinds of food in Adama: just like eh:: injera of teff and meat, raw meat.
9. Rab: Imm: what: which food do you like?
10. Tar: Yes: I like meat, shiro. Ok do you like coffee?
11. Rab: Yea.
12. Tar: Ok thank you. Me too.
13. Rab: Yea.

The conversation between Rab and Grm was opened by informal greeting adjacency pair parts: 'Hi-Hi,' the second being followed by *'I'm fine-How you are'* after mentioning each other's name. The second greeting adjacency pair part was followed by *'I'm fine.'* After the opening was made, Rab established the topic by asking a question about where Tar came from. Tar responded to Rab's question

showing a sign of hesitation with intelligible utterance. After Tar responded to the question, she reciprocated and asked about where Rab was from. Rab's response was appropriate and grammatically correct, except for a repetition of the preposition '*from...from*' and the use of longer stuttering (eh:). The questions and answers between the conversants were continuous as they were discussing the food culture, and their use of English was better than their language in the pre-intervention phase of the study. They commonly employed longer words and fillers, stuttered and extended utterances for the organization of ideas, and their utterances were characterized by the feature of spoken grammar all through their talk.

Furthermore, the closing of their conversation was conventional. For example, Tar tried to thank Rab, and the '*thank you*' utterance followed the acceptance of the invitation for coffee. Thus, from the perspective of conversation analysis, the conversants showed better performances as compared to their performances in the pre-intervention phase of the study.

Generally, participants used conversational structures very well, and this was observed, for instance, in the participants' greetings and closings in the above conversational situations. They also used better English in the post-intervention phase of the study; however, minor linguistic difficulties were observed in their attempt to talk.

Table 1

Comparison of the Pre-Intervention and Post-intervention Oral Performances of Participants

No.	Before the intervention Difficulties identified	After the intervention Developments exhibited
1	Violation of socio-cultural norms	Better performance of socio-cultural issues
2	Productions of incomplete utterances	Improved language use
3	Unnecessary and awkward repetitions	Awkward repetitions minimized
4	Awkward pauses (longer pauses)	Using fillers and empty forms or conversation continuers to maintain the conversations
5	Production of undesired and long stretched sounds	Production of undesired and long stretched sounds minimized
6	Severe grammatical inaccuracy	The use of spoken grammar improved
7	Fluency problems	Using desirable fillers and empty forms
8	Production of inaudible utterances	Using linguistic and conversational features
9	Lack of confidence	Confidence built
10	Linguistic difficulties	Using linguistic and conversational features
11	Stuttering	Stuttering minimized
12	Difficulties in closing a conversation	Closing of conversation improved
13	Incorrect use of language	The use of grammatically correct language features

Table 1 clarifies the comparison between the conversation features observed in the pre-intervention and the post-intervention phases of the study.

Prior to the intervention, the participants of the study had difficulties producing audible and clear language with appropriate socio-cultural norms of the target language. Here, the inaudibility of their utterances, the production of unclear language, and inappropriate use of some language elements marked their lack of confidence (uncertainty) when using certain utterances. Awkward repetitions and longer pauses as well as undesired and longer stretches of words were also major problems observed among the participants of the study in their attempt to contribute to different conversations. The use of inappropriate pauses and unnecessarily stretched words, moreover, confirmed their difficulties in oral interaction. They had also such difficulties as too much use of empty fillers which influenced the fluency of their speeches. Severe grammatical errors, production of incomplete utterances, stuttering, linguistic difficulties, inappropriate closing of conversations, and incorrect use of linguistic elements were also part of the difficulties that participants experienced in their effort to engage in conversations of various types.

However, in the post-intervention phase of the study, participants' difficulties were minimized. They were able to improve their language use; they minimized the use of awkward repetitions and longer stretching of words. They could also use empty fillers or conversation continuers to maintain their conversations. The appropriate use of fillers in a conversation is one of the conversational strategies used by conversants (Thornbury 2006; Waring, 2019). Since practices of conversation are done in real time, the use of fillers and empty forms is inevitable to maintain a conversation and avoid communication failure (Hilliard 2014; Duran & Sert, 2019). However, excessive use of fillers and empty forms is an indicator of difficulties in oral communication. Regardless of minor difficulties, study participants were able to use spoken grammar, correct expressions, and minimized stuttering in their contributions to the oral interactions they were engaged in. They used better grammatical structures in the post-intervention phase as compared to the pre-intervention phase of the study. In this regard, Hilliard (2014) explains that in spoken grammar the use of fillers and ellipsis or simple and incomplete forms is common as compared to the written

variety. Study participants also built their confidence while they were engaged in conversations, and they employed conversational features and linguistic forms in their conversations.

5. Discussion

Scholars including Seedhouse (2005), Sidnell (2010), and Barraja-Rohan (2011) maintain that CA makes a significant contribution when it comes to second or foreign language acquisition. Similarly, the contribution of CA has been substantiated by the present study as discussed below. As the present study was conducted to determine the contribution of CA in the areas of foreign language teaching and learning, it attempted to answer the following three research questions in relation to the application and contribution of CA in EFL contexts.

The aim of the first research question was to answer the question whether or not CA-based treatment would help promote students' use of conversational features in oral interaction. Interactants engaged in talk-in interaction are expected to have the knowledge of conversational structures or moves such as turn taking, turn design, sequential organization of utterances, and repair strategies, as well as the overall structure of conversation including the opening, the development, and the closing (Hoskins & Noel 2011; Wong & Waring, 2010; Dörnyie & Thurrell 1994). In this study, participants managed the turn taking issues better in the post-intervention phase than in the pre-intervention phase. They were observed to significantly contribute to the oral tasks they were involved in. They also used repair strategies to overcome language difficulties in a better way in the post-intervention phase of the study than in the pre-intervention phase. The sequential organization of their utterances (their production of interrelated pairs of utterances) significantly improved. The opening of their conversations also indicated better performances in the post intervention. Topic development, extension, and maintenance of a conversation through different strategies such as using conversation continuers and fillers are indicators of the development in the use of effective conversational moves (Hoskins & Noel 2011). An improvement was

also observed in the closing of participants' conversations which affirmed the development of their conversational skills. In fact, conversational structures are one of the most important pillars of oral interaction without which talk-in-interaction is impossible. Thus, participants' management of conversational structures in the conversations they held implied the development of their engagement in oral interactions.

The focus of the second research question was whether or not CA-informed intervention would develop learners' pragmalinguistic competence. One of the most crucial issues in oral interaction is the use of appropriate language forms in addition to the conversational structures (Dörnyie & Thurrell 1994; Yan, 2022). This also applies to the use of appropriate language forms in a variety of communication situations as different contexts call for different language use. As turn constructional units (utterances) can be language forms such as words, phrases, clauses, or sentences, even prosodic features and gap fillers (e.g., ehe, uh, imm) produced by conversation partners, the appropriate management of these linguistic and non-linguistic forms is crucial for effective oral interaction (Gardner, 2013). Participants demonstrated improved performances in terms of language use in the post-intervention phase of the study. They developed the skills of how people constructed utterances in real time, as well as the skills they needed when they used regular, patterned, and grammatical schemas under the constraints of having to talk in interaction. Their employment of spoken grammar and empty fillers implied their language development in oral interactions. Being able to use appropriate linguistic expressions based on a particular context of language use has an implication for greater contributions of CA in the teaching of foreign language oral skills. The overall oral productions of study participants also showed better development implying that CA-informed instructions could help promote oral interactions of language learners. CA-based instruction helps enhance learners' interactional skills and their engagement in a variety of oral interaction contexts (Barraja-Rohan 2011; Seedhouse 2005; Hutchby, 2019; Yan, 2022).

Before answering the third research question, it is important to make clear what oral interaction is. Oral interaction blends both the conversational structures and the linguistic resources needed for oral interaction (Dörnyie & Thurrell 1994). The third research question, therefore, focused on whether or not CA-informed intervention would promote students' engagement in oral interaction. In response to this question, the study revealed that participants showed enhanced performances in their engagement in oral interaction due to the CA-based intervention as the CA-informed instructions were conducted based on the problems identified using the CA analytic tool. As shown in the analyses part, each participant in the study showed improved language productions in the post-intervention phase of the study. Before the intervention was conducted, they produced utterances with difficulties in their turns, and their contribution to the conversation was minimal. Their fluency was highly affected by awkward and unnecessary repetitions, longer pauses, and the use of empty fillers. However, their oral productions improved in the post-intervention phase of the study; they performed better after the CA-based treatment. The turn design (linguistic utterances of different types) they employed in various oral performances developed after the intervention. Proper employment of turn design which refers to the use of certain turn constructional units, be it at lexical, phrasal, or syntactic level to perform a certain action, implied that participants communicated their ideas better by contributing to particular conversations (Markee, 2000). As they were taking chances, they tried to use pairs of expressions which went together, with the first pair of utterance being followed by the appropriate second pair of the utterance in the conversations they held. The use of features of spoken English grammar such as turn constructional units of different types (e.g., words, phrases, clauses or sentences, and gap fillers such as *ehe* and *imm*), longer turns, and repairs/conversational strategies developed among participants, and this confirmed the positive contribution of CA in the arena of EFL as several scholars have highlighted elsewhere (Barraja-Rohan, 2011; Seedhouse, 2011). In connection to this, Gordon (2004) argues that examining the issue of grammar in talk can help understand the relationship between the grammatical resources

available in a language, including the many options or ways to ask a question and the sequential position of an action, such as whether this is an only question, or the first in a series of questions, or a later one in a series of questions.

The development of conversational features is an indicator of language learning and improvement of oral interaction ability. In this study, participants were able to extend conversation using conversation extending strategies such as using questions as indicated in the transcriptions of the post-intervention analyses. Their contribution to the conversation also showed a significant change in the post-intervention conversation analyses as compared to the pre-intervention oral productions of them. Their use of repairs or conversational strategies to sustain the conversation was also one of the indicators of the development of their oral interaction ability. In their turn to contribute to the conversation they were involved in, they requested clarification, and having understood the request for clarification, they responded accordingly.

Another encouraging result obtained as a result of the CA-informed instruction is that the participants learned how a conversation was held and what language structure was used in a conversation as opposed to the language structure employed in written communication. As the experience of the researcher showed, the difficulty of language learners in a foreign language context is their adherence to grammatical accuracy and their tendency to use written grammar in conversations. This trend can lead to confusion, and it is one of the factors contributing to the deterioration of oral skills in English. However, in the present study, the knowledge of how the spoken variety of the language worked developed among participants of the study through the intervention and minimized the confusion or difficulty that they had prior to the intervention. CA has been found to be a helpful analytical tool for identifying and examining language related difficulties in conversation (Masats, 2017). Hence, the contribution of CA to language learning and teaching is of vital importance, as Barraja-Rohan (2011) emphasizes, that the CA approach as a tool is a helpful instrument for addressing

problems of language teaching and learning. Wong and Waring (2010) also echo this, noting that CA is important as it is a foundation of all language learning. The results of the present study correspond with the works of these scholars.

8. About the Author

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11. Appendix

CA Audio/Cideo Data Transcription Conventions

	Symbol	Name	Use/function
Sequencing	[<i>A single left bracket</i>	Indicates the point of overlap onset.
]	<i>A single right bracket</i>	Indicates the point at which an utterance or utterance part terminates vis-à-vis another one.
	=	<i>Equal signs</i>	One at the end of one line and one at the beginning of the next indicate no 'gap' between the two lines. This is often called latching.
Timed intervals	(0)	<i>Numbers in parentheses</i>	Indicate elapsed time in silence, so (8) is a pause of 8 seconds.
	(.)	<i>A dot in parentheses</i>	Indicates a tiny 'gap' within or between utterances.
	(())	<i>Double parentheses</i>	Indicate doubts, transcriber's comment and inaudible parts of utterances and non-verbal language used.
Characteristics of speech production	::	<i>Colons/multiple colons</i>	Indicate prolongation or length of the immediately prior sound. Multiple colons indicate a more prolonged sound.
	-	<i>A dash</i>	Indicates a cut-off.
	?	<i>Punctuation marks</i>	Are used to indicate characteristics of speech production, especially intonation; it is not referring to grammatical units; an alternative is an italicized question mark: ?
	.	<i>A period</i>	Indicates a stopping fall in tone.