Small but Multi-functional: Response Tokens in Content Language Integrated Learning Interaction

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Abstract
This paper is an investigation of language use inside a content language integrated learning (CLIL) classroom at Saudi tertiary level. It examines the difference in language use between teachers and students in four subject-specific classrooms in which English is used as a medium of instruction. The study is informed by corpus linguistics (CL) and uses the principles and theoretical underpinning of conversation analysis (CA). It identifies the most frequent linguistic features of CLIL and examines their diverse interactional functions in this context. Amongst the most frequent linguistic features in CLIL are short response tokens such as "yes" and "no". Using a micro-analytic approach to conversation analysis, a closer look at the data shows the students' ability to use small and limited linguistic resources to accomplish multiple interactional functions such as taking the floor, taking turns and, most importantly, displaying orientation to knowledge. The data reflected the relationship between frequency and meaning construction. With regard to the difference in language use between teachers and students with regard to comes to short response tokens, the study shows some common interactional uses of response tokens between teachers and students, such as agreement, acknowledgement, response to confirmation checks and yes/no questions. On the other hand, it shows some exclusive interactional use of the same token by teachers and students. Finally, the paper emphasises the relationship of language, interaction and orientation to content knowledge in CLIL classrooms. Pedagogically, the findings have implications for teachers' language use and for increased classroom interaction.
Keywords: classroom interaction, CLIL, conversation analysis, corpus linguistics response tokens