Managing students’ dispreferred answers in English-medium instruction in a Turkish higher education setting

Derya Duran, Olcay Sert
Hacettepe University, Turkey

Previous conversation analytic research has shown the importance of how dispreference is displayed to address the pedagogical focus in the classroom (Seedhouse, 1997; Hellermann, 2009; Kaanta, 2010). Yet, to our knowledge, there are no studies available on the teachers’ dispreferred responses to previous learner turns in an English as a medium of instruction (EMI) setting. The present study attempts to fill this research gap by exploring how a teacher demonstrates dispreference to students’ answers. The data consist of transcriptions of 30 hours of video recordings from two content classes, which were recorded for an academic term at a university in Turkey whose medium of instruction is English. Using Conversation Analysis, the study revealed that the teacher employs a variety of interactional resources such as changing body position, diverging gaze trajectories, overlap, laughter, hedging, and delaying devices to project dispreference. The study also indicated that whenever a dispreferred answer is manifested by a student in a word search practice, the teacher did not attend to it as a trouble source; thus prioritising content over language. Another interesting finding of the study is the teacher’s use of a formulaic expression (‘I am (not) talking about...’) to mark dispreference and re-specify the topic. Such findings will provide understanding of how teachers manage dispreferred turns-at-talk in an EMI context. The study has implications for understanding the institutional fingerprints of EMI and classroom interaction, and it provides important insights into pedagogy and the organization of repair in this unique context.

Keywords: English as a medium of instruction, conversation analysis, dispreferred answers, classroom interaction.