Navigating a 'local' conversational trajectory in a 'globally' framed institutional event: The pre-allocation of student topic nomination in L2 conversation-for-learning

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The presentation seeks to reinterpret the overarching 'global' and 'local' conference theme in relation to the interactional architecture of L2 'conversation-for-learning' (Kasper 2004): in this case, interaction staged between teachers and students of English as a foreign language in the conversation lounge of a Japanese university. While the topics of conversation are typically rooted in the foreign culture and nationality of the teachers, 'global' is here taken to refer to the institutionalization of conversation practice, as underpinned in the present context by the pre-allocation of student topic nomination. As such, the 'global' framing of the event contrasts with the 'local' contingency of conversational organization (Sacks et al. 1978).

Drawing on discourse segments in illustration of its potential effects on the trajectory of interaction, the presentation explores the institutional prescription of student topic selection along with its framing in conversation-for-learning. In so doing it questions, or problematizes (Pennycook 1999, 2001), the practice of seeking to invert an assumed underlying asymmetry of teacher-student interaction as a form of institutional discourse by pre-allocating rights of topic nomination to the students. This is seen to present an inherent paradox, which manifests itself in negotiated (and contested) frames in the relevant context of conversation-for-learning.

References