

# Co-construction of teacher-as-observer

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## *Abstract*

The paper presents an analysis of how a status of teacher-as-observer is co-constructed by a teacher and students during a discussion task. The data are drawn from video-recordings of a student discussion in an English language class at a Japanese university. Affordances of the spatial organization of the classroom for participant action and interaction are discussed. The analysis shows how the teacher does a *display of just observing*, how the students disattend the teacher, how the teacher may respond to student talk, and how the teacher's actions are sensitive to the state of student interaction. It is argued that the participants contribute in different ways to the co-construction of the teacher-as-observer. It is also argued that this teacher in this classroom is thereby co-constructed as not only an observer, but an attentive observer and good teacher.

Classrooms provide a physical, dedicated location for students and teachers to do the things they do as students and teachers. Through how they act and interact with other participants in the classroom, there are a variety of ways that these participants have to do being students and to do being teachers. The spatial organization of a classroom, which is likely to some extent to be flexible, as it may be possible, for example, to move around things like desks and chairs, both constrains and enables—or more generally, affords—different possibilities for action and interaction (Hanks, 1996; Kimura, et al., 2018; LeBaron & Streeck, 1997). The spatial arrangement of furniture, for example, can afford different potential shared interactional spaces (Mondada, 2009) for seated participants and afford different paths of potential movement for mobile participants.

In this paper, I look at how a particular way of doing being the teacher, specifically, the teacher-as-observer, is co-constructed by students and their teacher during a student discussion task in an English as a foreign language classroom at a Japanese university. As is described in more detail below, the students are divided into three groups, are seated at different tables, and have been given the task of discussing something in English, while the teacher moves around the classroom and observes the different groups. Though it is the teacher who does the observing, his status as an observer is co-constructed through both his and the students' actions and orientations. Below, after introducing the participants, the classroom, and other features of the data in more detail, I look at 1) how the teacher accomplishes displays of *just observing* and can also temporarily suspend such a display; 2) how the students contribute to the co-construction of the teacher-as-observer; 3) how the teacher may respond to

things that students say in ways that do not involve him ceasing to be an observer, while also demonstrating that he is an attentive observer; and 4) how changes in the teacher's observation are sensitive to the students' talk, which also demonstrates that he is an attentive observer. I would like to suggest that this analysis can contribute to an enhanced understanding of what it means for a teacher to observe students as they engage in a classroom task.

## PARTICIPANTS, CLASSROOM, AND RECORDINGS

The data are from a relatively small English language class of twelve first-year students at a university in Tokyo which specializes in engineering and applied science. The students are not majoring in English, which is not offered as a major at this university, but are in a program which emphasizes the importance of developing communicative ability in English. This class focuses on the development of discussion skills and is in addition to the regular English classes required of all first-year students, which also tend to be much larger. The teacher is a first-language user of English and has a graduate-level degree in a field related to second and foreign language pedagogy.

The classroom is spatially organized so as to afford interaction among the relatively sedentary students within small groups and to afford the teacher's access to each group and his movement around at least parts of the classroom. (See Figures 1 and 2.) Tables are set up in three rectangular islands, each consisting of two tables. Four occupied chairs are set around each island, two at each of the longer sides of the rectangle. With students seated in the chairs, the central area of each island affords a potential shared interactional space for the students. This arrangement also affords other potential shared interactional spaces, such as between two students on one side of the table. For one of the islands, there is an additional unoccupied chair. There is a minidisc recorder on this chair placed there by the researcher, raising the possibility that this chair was also placed there by the researcher. (See Figure 2, bottom left corner.)



Figure 1



Figure 2

As the students are seated and as there is sufficient space between different islands, the spatial organization affords observation of a particular group from various locations around each island by the standing or walking teacher. However, two of the islands are close enough for the seated students to obstruct movement between them. This does not block access to any group by the observing teacher, though it does limit the paths that he may use. As there are potential shared interactional spaces for the students in each group, the spatial organization affords them the possibility of disattending the observing teacher by orienting instead to such an interactional space. Finally, the absence of occupied chairs on the shorter sides of each island affords the non-sitting teacher a possible location to join the group interaction. The teacher and students make use of each of these affordances of the spatial organization as they co-construct the teacher-as-observer.

These data were recorded several years ago with two video cameras and a minidisc recorder for audio. All the students and the teacher provided oral consent to have the class recorded for research purposes. One camera was stationary while the other was operated by the researcher. The minidisc recorder was placed on a chair next to one group, with a microphone placed on one of the tables. These data were recorded at a time when my primary research interest was in how students interact during a student-centered task. Both cameras and the minidisc recorder were therefore set up in order to capture the interaction among one group of students (the group in the center of Figure 1 and in the foreground in Figure 2), rather than to capture the actions of the teacher or students in other groups. As a result, parts of the classroom, some of the students in other groups, and some of the teacher's embodied conduct are not captured in the video. This is an obvious limitation of the data for the purposes of this paper, but is not such a severe limitation as to prevent analysis of how the teacher observes the students or of how at least some of the students contribute to the co-construction of the teacher-as-observer.

The transcripts are *frame-centered*, in order to capture the embodied conduct of the participants. There is one second between each frame.<sup>1</sup> Frames are annotated to identify parti-

1 This kind of frame-centered transcript is more-or-less my own invention, but it has precedents in other work on interaction, such as Laurier (2013). The timing of the frames is clearly an etic timing, or what

participants and highlight aspects of embodied conduct. Facial features are blurred or blackened to protect anonymity. When aspects of embodied conduct need to be highlighted for the analysis, descriptions of this embodied conduct are shown next to the corresponding frame. The following abbreviations are used: LH and RH for left hand and right hand; *gz* for gaze;<sup>2</sup> and *fwd* and *twd* for forward and toward. The descriptions represent one second of conduct, from the point when the frame was taken to the point when the next frame was taken. When students' talk is not relevant for the analysis, it is not shown in the transcript. When students' talk is relevant for the analysis, it is included. The teacher's talk is always included, but often the teacher does not say anything. When talk is included, it is transcribed according to standard Conversation Analytic conventions (Jefferson, 2004). It is shown below the description of embodied conduct. Like the descriptions of embodied conduct, the transcribed talk next to a particular frame represents the talk from the time the frame was taken to the point when the next frame was taken.

### DOING A *DISPLAY OF JUST OBSERVING*

In this section, I look at how the teacher organizes his bodily conduct, and in particular his hands, to produce a *display of just observing*. Extract 1 provides a first example.

#### *Extract 1*



*Frame 1: Te entering video shot, walking fwd, gz to group on right; slows down*

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Mondada (2018) calls *chronos*, rather than an emic timing, or *kairos*. While I recognize that this has its limitations, I have opted for the former in order to provide a feel for how quickly or slowly the teacher is moving, as well as for the duration of periods of immobility. In addition, a reviewer commented that some of the frames contain space that is irrelevant to the conduct of the teacher and that could therefore be removed. I have opted not to remove this space in order to preserve a sense of spatial relationships in the classroom.

- 2 As pointed out by a reviewer, my use of *gaze* as a neutral term may be problematic. The reviewer is correct, but I have opted to continuing using it because it is widely used in this manner in other conversation analytic work and because other terms would not necessarily be less problematic.



*Frame 2: Tè gz on group; turns upper body, speeds up*



*Frame 3: Tè walking fwd; gz fwd*



*Frame 4: Tè walking fwd; gz to group on left*



*Frame 5: Tè walking fwd, maintaining gz*



*Frame 6: T<sub>e</sub> walking fwd, maintaining gz*



*Frame 7: T<sub>e</sub> walking fwd; leaves video shot*

The teacher enters the video shot from the right while walking forward and gazes to the group of students on his right (frame 1). He slows down while turning his upper body and head toward this group (frame 2), but does not stop walking. He soon returns to his original walking pace, turns his upper body back toward its original orientation (frame 3), and turns his head back to face the direction in which he is walking (frame 4). As he continues walking, he turns his head toward the group on his front left (frame 5) and maintains his gaze on this group by continuously turning his head as he walks past (frames 6 and 7). Throughout the extract, the teacher keeps both hands in his pockets.

Extract 2 provides a second example.

Extract 2



Frame 1: *Te enters video shot, walking fwd, gz on group on left; walks around group*



Frame 2: *Te walking, maintaining gz on group*



Frame 3: *Te walking, maintaining gz on group*



*Frame 4: T<sub>e</sub> walking, maintaining gz on group; stops walking, turns twd group*



*Frame 5: T<sub>e</sub> maintaining gz; steps back*



*Frame 6: T<sub>e</sub> maintaining gz*



*Frame 7: T<sub>e</sub> maintaining gz, sways left*



Frame 8: *T<sub>e</sub>* continues swaying left, *gz* on same group

The teacher enters the video shot from the right, walking forward with his gaze on the group to his left (frame 1). He maintains his gaze on this group as he walks around it (frames 2, 3, and 4). He then stops walking and steps back with his right foot to turn his body toward this group (frames 5 and 6). He maintains a relatively still position as he continues observing this group for several seconds (frames 7 and 8 and beyond the end of this extract; see extract 9). Throughout the extract, as well as before and after, the teacher has his right arm crossed across his chest and tucked into the inner elbow area of his left arm. His left hand is held near his chin and he sometimes rubs his nose (e.g., in frame 3).

In extract 1, the teacher is continuously moving forward, while in extract 2, he shifts from moving forward to adopting a relatively immobile position. In both cases, though, his embodied conduct constitutes a *display of just observing*. In particular, in both extracts, his hands are observably not ready for gesturing. (See also Svinhufvud, 2018.) In extract 1, both hands are in his pockets, and in extract 2, one hand is being used to hold the arm folded across the chest and the other is being used for face-centered self-involvement. This is not to say that he could not enter into interaction with the students and/or start gesturing, but rather that if he were to enter into interaction with the students, and if this interaction involved him using one or both hands for gesturing as part of that interaction, then this would require a change in what he is doing with his hands, namely, taking his hands from his pockets, or unfolding his right arm, or ceasing the face-centered self-involvement. The teacher is doing not-being-ready-to-start-gesturing, which contributes to a *display of just observing*.

Extract 3 shows how he can shift out of such a display. (The students are in the group farther away from the camera.)

Extract 3



Frame 1: *Te walking fwd, arms closed*



Frame 2: *Te walking fwd, arms folded*

(0.4)

S1: who (0.3)=



Frame 3: *Te walking, turns right, maintains gz on group*

S1: =who: , (0.5)=



Frame 4: *Te stops walking, turns twd group*

S1: =(0.2) who::\_ (0.4)=



Frame 5: *Te shifts body left*

S1: =(0.4)

S3: uh::=



Frame 6: *Te still*

S3: =(0.3) †no one.  
(0.3)



Frame 7: *Te bends fwd while laughing*

(0.2)

Ss: hh[ha ha=

Te: [hhh



Frame 8:  $T_e$  starts walking right, maintaining gz on group

Ss: = ha ha (0.2) .hh



Frame 9:  $T_e$  stops walking, turns twd group



Frame 10:  $T_e$  steps back



Frame 11:  $T_e$  stepping back;  $S_2$  and  $S_3$  gz to  $T_e$

$T_e$ :  $\underline{g}o :: \circ (. ) =$



Frame 12: T<sub>e</sub> LH fwd, two beats, then held

Te: =ʔs' y' don' agree with anybody.



Frame 13: T<sub>e</sub> LH retracted, bends fwd; S<sub>3</sub>, S<sub>2</sub> gz down

S<sub>3</sub>: yes



Frame 14: T<sub>e</sub> straightens up

Te: oh:: ʔokay. (.)=



Frame 15: T<sub>e</sub> moves fwd, LH forward, open-hand palm-up, one beat; S<sub>2</sub> gz to T<sub>e</sub>

Te: =ʔso what ih- ʔwhat's yer:=



Frame 16:  $\bar{t}e$  LH one beat, retracted;  $S_4$  gz to  $\bar{t}e$

Te: =original opinion.  
 ((interaction continues))



Frame 17: Interaction continues

At the start of this extract, the teacher is approaching a group of students in front of him. Both arms are folded across his chest (frames 1, 2, and 3). He starts to turn right (frames 3 and 4), while continuing to gaze at this group, but then stops and orients toward this group (frames 4 and 5). As the teacher is doing this,  $S_1$  uses talk (the word “who” repeated three times) and gesture to ask  $S_3$  a question about which fictional character from the textbook he agrees with. While the teacher is relatively immobile, observing this group (frames 5 and 6),  $S_3$  answers the question with “no one.” This is responded to with laughter from the other students which is joined by the teacher, who bends forward slightly (frames 7 and 8).<sup>3</sup> The teacher then starts to move away (frames 8 and 9). Up to this point, the teacher, with his arms folded across his chest, has been doing a *display of just observing*. He then appears ready to move off to observe a different group.

However, instead, the teacher changes direction and moves back toward this group, while also moving back slightly (frames 9, 10, and 11). As he does this, he initiates verbal interaction with  $S_3$  by saying “so” (frame 11), which is then recycled as he asks a question (“so you don’t agree with anybody”, frame 12). The word “so” is recycled, but the teacher’s first and second uses of this word are rather different. In the first use, the elongated word is used to initiate the interaction and attracts the attention of at least two of the students,  $S_2$  and  $S_3$ , who shift their gaze to the teacher. In the second use, the word is reduced to just the consonant sound

3 See section below called “Responding as Teacher-as-Observer” for consideration of how the teacher responds.

and it serves to explicitly tie this question back to S<sub>3</sub>'s prior answer, so that the question is hearable as addressed to S<sub>3</sub> and as a follow-up to S<sub>1</sub>'s earlier question. Though what he says can be understood as a question, it is grammatically formatted as a declarative which formulates the upshot of S<sub>3</sub>'s answer to S<sub>1</sub>'s question and calls for either a confirmation or correction from S<sub>3</sub>. Importantly, as he asks the question, the teacher brings his left hand out into the gesture space and uses it to produce beat gestures while talking. The teacher has thus initiated interaction with a student in this group and suspended his *display of just observing* as he uses one of his hands for gesturing.

After he completes the question, the teacher retracts his gesturing hand (frames 13 and 14). He then responds to S<sub>3</sub>'s answer/confirmation (frame 13) with a sequence closing third (frame 14) and the three students who have been gazing at him shift their gazes down (frames 13 and 14). At this point, the sequence initiated by the teacher is hearably complete and it is possible that the interaction between the teacher and S<sub>3</sub> is also complete. The teacher straightens up and his arms are once again folded across his chest, so that he can be seen as returning to just observing. Instead, though, he asks another question, again bringing his left hand forward for gesturing (frames 15 and 16). As before, this question attracts the attention of some of the students. The interaction between the teacher and S<sub>3</sub> then continues until, eventually, the teacher leaves this group and goes on to observe a different group (not shown).

Throughout the discussion task, the teacher observes the different groups of students, sometimes moving around the room (e.g. in extract 1, at the start of extract 3), sometimes moving around a particular group (e.g., at the start of extract 2), and sometimes observing a particular group while remaining relatively immobile (e.g. at the end of extract 2, in the middle of extract 3). One way that he shows himself to be an observer is through *displays of just observing*, constituted in part through how he holds his hands in positions which show that they are not-ready-to-be-used-for-gesturing. As shown in extract 3, though, this kind of display can be suspended as the teacher initiates interaction with a student.

## DISATTENDING THE OBSERVER

In extract 3, when the teacher initiated interaction with S<sub>3</sub>, three of the four students in this group oriented to the teacher as doing something more than just observing by shifting their gaze to him. The student who was addressed also validated the teacher's entering the interaction by answering his question.<sup>4</sup> These students thus contribute to teacher's suspension of his *display of just observing*. More typically, though, the students do the obverse. That is, they disattend the teacher's presence and, through this disattention, contribute to the co-construction of teacher-as-observer.

Extracts 4 and 5 show two examples. In extract 4, the students listed in the transcript are at the central table.

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4 The other student in this group, S<sub>1</sub>, does not shift his gaze to the teacher. An interesting possibility is that, as the teacher's questions can be heard as follow-up questions for S<sub>1</sub>'s initial question, S<sub>1</sub> treats the teacher as now having taken over his discourse identity (Wilson, 1991; Zimmerman, 1998).

Extract 4



Frame 1: *Te enters video frame, gz twd S3 and S4*



Frame 2: *Te moving fwd, gz twd S3 and S4*



Frame 3: *Te stops, gz twd S3 and S4*



Frame 4: Tè gz twd S<sub>3</sub> and S<sub>4</sub>



Frame 5: Tè gz twd S<sub>3</sub> and S<sub>4</sub>, bead up



Frame 6: Tè gz twd S<sub>3</sub> and S<sub>4</sub>, starts nodding; S<sub>3</sub> RH to table, starts nodding; S<sub>4</sub> nod on “n:”

(0.8)

S4: n: .



Frame 7: Tè nodding, starts moving fwd; S<sub>3</sub> nodding, gz to S<sub>4</sub>



Frame 8: Tè moving fwd, stops

S4: there are many=



Frame 9: Tè moves fwd, gz down

S4: =: : ↑many<=



Frame 10: Tè moving fwd, gz to other group

S4: =(0.8) many kind=



Frame 11: Tè moving fwd, gz on other group

S4: =(.) ↓many kind (.) ↑many=



Frame 12: *T<sub>e</sub> moving fwd, gz on other group*

S4: =: : (0.9)=



Frame 13: *T<sub>e</sub> moving fwd, gz on other group*

S4: =(0.2) uh: :



Frame 14: *T<sub>e</sub> exits video frame*

In this extract, the teacher enters from the right of the video shot, with his gaze in the direction of S<sub>3</sub> and S<sub>4</sub> (frames 1, 2, and 3). He then stops walking and maintains his gaze on these students for several seconds (frames 3 to 7). He then starts walking again (frames 7 and 8), briefly stops (frame 8), and then walks forward again (frames 9 to 14). As he walks forward, he passes this group and shifts his gaze to the group in front of him on his left (frames 10, 11, and 12).

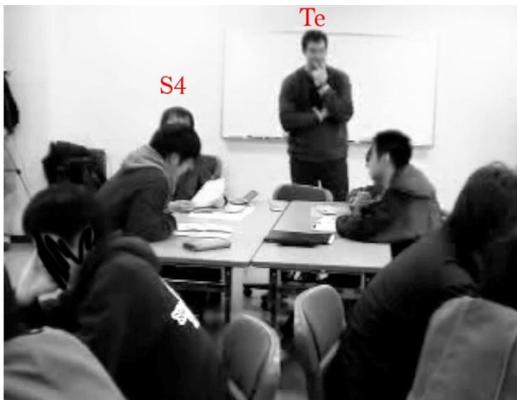
Throughout this extract, S<sub>3</sub> and S<sub>4</sub> are interacting and S<sub>2</sub> and probably S<sub>1</sub> are watching from across the table. When the teacher walks into the video shot, stops walking, and observes the interaction between S<sub>3</sub> and S<sub>4</sub> from an immobile position for several seconds

(frames 1 to 7), it is possible that S<sub>1</sub> and S<sub>2</sub> are unaware of his presence. However, it is extremely unlikely that either S<sub>3</sub> or S<sub>4</sub> is unaware of the teacher standing there observing them. Nevertheless, they disattend his presence. S<sub>3</sub>, who has been asked a question by S<sub>4</sub> (not shown) and is apparently thinking of the answer, is first focused on the textbook (frames 1 to 5). He then responds to S<sub>4</sub>'s question by nodding (frames 5, 6, and 7) and shifts his gaze to S<sub>4</sub> (frames 7 and 8). For his part, S<sub>4</sub> gazes at S<sub>3</sub> throughout the time that S<sub>3</sub> is thinking of his answer and eventually answers. At no point in the first part of this extract do S<sub>3</sub> or S<sub>4</sub> shift their attention to the teacher. As the teacher moves forward and passes this group (from frame 7 on), it is very unlikely that at least S<sub>2</sub>, even if he was previously unaware of the teacher's presence, is not able to see the teacher in his peripheral vision.<sup>5</sup> Like S<sub>3</sub> and S<sub>4</sub>, though, he does not shift his attention to the teacher and continues to attend to the interaction of these two students.

There is also another way that the students disattend the teacher's presence in this extract. Which is that they do not attempt to obstruct the observability of their interaction. They could, for example, move closer together and lower their speaking volume, making it harder for the teacher to hear what they are saying, or simply stop their interaction. Such conduct has been found by Jakonen (2018) within some student groups, apparently in order to hide their interaction from the observing teacher. Were the students to do this, it would treat the teacher's conduct of observing them as unwelcome, or even illegitimate. In extract 4, though, as well as in the rest of the recorded data from which this extract is drawn, the students appear not to try to obstruct the teacher's ability to observe.

Extract 5 involves the same group of students.

### Extract 5



Frame 1: *Te faces and steps left, nods slightly X<sub>3</sub>*

(0.7)

S4: *but:=*

5 It is also likely that S<sub>1</sub> becomes aware of the teacher's presence as he passes, if she was not aware of it previously. However, it is impossible to tell from this camera angle whether she shifts her attention to the teacher.



Frame 2: *T* steps fwd

S4: =(0.3) m:: (0.2)=



Frame 3: *T* steps fwd

S4: =an:: d uh=



Frame 4: *T* steps fwd, turns right

S4: =:: (0.7)=



Frame 5: *T* steps forward

S4: =(1.0)=



Frame 6: *Te steps fwd, gz right (to S4?)*

S4: =(1.0)=



Frame 7: *Te gz on (S4?), finishes step*

S4: =(1.0)=



Frame 8: *Te gz on S4, moves right*

S4: =(1.0)=



Frame 9: *Te gz on S4, moving right, faces right*

S4: =the United Sta:tes=



Frame 10: T<sub>e</sub> standing, facing S<sub>3</sub> and S<sub>4</sub>, gz on S<sub>4</sub>

S4: =(0.5) uh: :=



Frame 11: T<sub>e</sub> standing, facing S<sub>3</sub> and S<sub>4</sub>, gz on S<sub>4</sub>

S4: =(1.0)=



Frame 12: T<sub>e</sub> standing, facing S<sub>3</sub> and S<sub>4</sub>, gz on S<sub>4</sub>

S4: =(1.0)=



Frame 13: T<sub>e</sub> facing S<sub>3</sub> and S<sub>4</sub>, gz on S<sub>4</sub>, moves left

S4: =(1.0)=



Frame 14: Tè turns left, gz off S4, moves fwd

S4: =(1.0)=



Frame 15: Tè steps fwd

S4: =uh::::=



Frame 16: Tè moving fwd, turns twd S4

S4: =have a- (0.5)=



Frame 17: Tè moves back

S4: =>have a good< situation.



Frame 18: *T<sub>e</sub> moves fwd, gz off S<sub>4</sub>*

In this extract, the teacher leaves a relatively immobile position and starts walking around this group (frames 1 to 7). He then shifts his gaze to S<sub>4</sub> and once more observes from a relatively immobile position (frames 8 to 13). Next, he starts moving forward again (frames 13 to 16), but once more turns to observe S<sub>4</sub> (frames 16 and 17). Throughout, S<sub>4</sub> is trying to articulate something, but is having serious difficulties. His talk in frames 1 to 4 involves several elongations, pauses, and non-lexical sounds. From frame 4 through frame 8, though he has not reached a possible completion point, there are several seconds of silence, a silence which clearly belongs to S<sub>4</sub>. This silence is not ended until S<sub>4</sub> starts talking again in frame 9, but again there is a pause and an elongated “uh” (frame 10). This is followed by several more seconds of silence (frames 11 to 14) before S<sub>4</sub> produces talk again (frame 15). This involves another elongated “uh,” followed by “have a” and another pause (frame 16), before S<sub>4</sub> reaches a possible completion point by recycling “have a” and then bringing what he is saying to grammatical completion with “good situation” (frame 17).

It is quite clear, then, that S<sub>4</sub> is having serious difficulty in articulating what he is trying to say. Nevertheless, he never appeals to the teacher for assistance. For his part, the teacher does not offer any unsolicited help. S<sub>4</sub> thus does not orient to the teacher as a resource to help him in this interaction, even in the face of serious difficulty with the use of English.<sup>6</sup>

As shown in extract 3 above, there are times, namely, when the teacher addresses talk to a student, that the students attend to the teacher. Another example is shown in extract 6, which involves the same group of students as in extracts 4 and 5. Prior to this extract, S<sub>4</sub> has asked S<sub>3</sub> a question about the content of S<sub>3</sub>'s opinion and S<sub>3</sub> has answered it. At the start of the extract, S<sub>3</sub> and S<sub>4</sub> close this sequence through talk and embodied conduct, such as nodding, gaze shift, and adjustment of bodily position (frames 2 and 3).

<sup>6</sup> S<sub>4</sub> can be seen as orienting to a rule for student group work of only asking the teacher for help as a last resort, or possibly of never asking the teacher for help.

Extract 6



Frame 1: *Te enters video frame, gz on S3, S4*



Frame 2: *Te walking forward, gz left on S3, S4; S3 head and gz to S4, moves back; then S4 gz to S3, smiles and nods*

S4: (0.4) oka(h)y



Frame 3: *Te walking forward, turns left; S3 nods, gz down, moves back; S4 gz left, then down*

S3: ye::s.



Frame 4: *Te* moving forward



Frames 5a and 5b: *Te* moving forward, gz to *S1* and *S2*, LH from pocket, open-hand palm-up gesture; *S3* gz to *Te*; then *S4* gz to *Te*; then *S1* and *S2* gz to *Te*



*Te*: what about what about you guys.=



Frames 6a and 6b: Te gesture reaches max, then retracted;  
S1, S2, S3, S4 gz on Te; S2 gz to S1 on "your"; S1 gz off Te on  
"opinion"



Te: =did you say your opinion?



Frames 7a and 7b: Te stops, turning to face S1, S2; S2 RH  
thumb point to S1





Frames 8a and 8b: T<sub>e</sub> facing S<sub>1</sub>, S<sub>2</sub>; S<sub>1</sub> RH gesture, gz to S<sub>3</sub>; S<sub>3</sub> gz down; S<sub>4</sub> gz to S<sub>1</sub>



Frame 9: T<sub>e</sub> facing S<sub>1</sub>, S<sub>2</sub>; S<sub>1</sub> continuing RH gesture



Frame 10: T<sub>e</sub> facing S<sub>1</sub>, S<sub>2</sub>; S<sub>1</sub> gz to S<sub>2</sub>, mutual gz, stops gesture

S3: hehh=



Frame 11: *T<sub>e</sub> facing S<sub>1</sub>, S<sub>2</sub>, briefly tilts head; S<sub>1</sub> gz off S<sub>2</sub>; S<sub>2</sub> RH open-palm gesture to S<sub>1</sub>, gz off S<sub>1</sub>*

S3: hhih



Frame 12: *T<sub>e</sub> facing S<sub>1</sub>, S<sub>2</sub>, shifts weight, nods slightly*



Frame 13: *T<sub>e</sub> gz on S<sub>1</sub>, moves left; S<sub>1</sub> gz to S<sub>2</sub>, nods on "m.", gz off S<sub>2</sub>*

S1: m. (0.2)=



Frame 14: *T<sub>e</sub> gz on S<sub>1</sub>, stops moving, tilts head*

S1: =(0.8) n:-



Frame 15: *T* gaz on *S*<sub>1</sub>, tilting head, shifts right



Frame 16: *T* gaz on *S*<sub>1</sub>, tilting head

*S*<sub>1</sub>: (0.6) I thi:nk=

In this extract, the teacher enters the video shot and walks around this group as *S*<sub>3</sub> and *S*<sub>4</sub> close the prior sequence (frames 1 to 4). The teacher then uses talk and a gesture to address a question to *S*<sub>1</sub> and *S*<sub>2</sub> (frames 5a/b and 6a/b). This question attracts the attention of all four students, who shift their gaze to the teacher (frames 6a/b). However, rather than answer the question, the addressees (*S*<sub>1</sub> and *S*<sub>2</sub>) enter into nonverbal negotiation regarding which of them will talk next (frames 7a/b to 12). This involves *S*<sub>2</sub> pointing to *S*<sub>1</sub> with his thumb (frames 7b and 8b), *S*<sub>1</sub> gesturing with her right hand (frame 9), *S*<sub>1</sub> and *S*<sub>2</sub> establishing mutual gaze (frames 10 and 11), and an open-hand point by *S*<sub>2</sub> to *S*<sub>1</sub> (frames 11 and 12). During the start of the negotiation, all four students reorient through gaze from the teacher to one another. The negotiation is responded to with laughter by *S*<sub>3</sub> (frames 10 and 11). Finally, *S*<sub>1</sub> starts to produce talk, starting with thinking sounds and pauses (frames 13 to 16) before projecting a statement of her opinion with “I think” (frame 16).

Here, then, even when the teacher enters into the interaction with talk and gesture addressed to two of the students in the group, rather than respond to the teacher, the students quickly reorient to interacting among themselves. They treat the teacher’s question not as something which makes an answer conditionally relevant, but as an instruction for one of them to give his or her opinion next. What they treat as relevant to do next is to give an opinion, with the negotiation related to who will do this being something that needs to be settled first. When the opinion is started, it is addressed to the other students, not to the teacher.

The students thus treat the teacher's talk as an instruction that should be, and is, followed, rather than as a question which calls for an answer.

Finally, extract 7 shows a case in which the teacher addresses talk to the entire class. (S2 and S4 are in the group in the background, by the window).

*Extract 7*



*Frame 1: Te turning to his left; S2 gz to Te*

T: y'so †take a couple more=



*Frame 2: Te turning; S4 gz to Te*

T: =minutes:. (.)=



*Frame 3: Te turning, walks forward; S2 and S4 gz off Te*

T: =†take a couple more minutes:.



Frame 4: *T<sub>e</sub> walking forward*

In this extract, the teacher turns (frames 1, 2, and 3) and walks towards the front of the classroom (frames 3 and 4). He does so while addressing an announcement to the class which informs them that they should complete the discussion soon. As he makes this announcement, S<sub>2</sub> (frames 1 and 2) and then S<sub>4</sub> (frames 2 and 3) shift their gaze to him, and can thus be seen as not disattending him. However, they very soon shift their attention off the teacher and back to others in their group (frames 3 and 4). Meanwhile, the other five students visible in the camera shot (four students in the foreground and one in the same group as S<sub>2</sub> and S<sub>4</sub>), while they presumably heard the teacher, continue to disattend him.

There are probably times when some students do not realize that the teacher is observing them. However, there are certainly numerous other times when the students are not unaware of the teacher's presence, yet they disattend it. They neither look toward the teacher to engage him in interaction nor try to obstruct what they are doing from the teacher's gaze. Even, as in extract 5, when a student is having serious difficulty articulating something in English, the student does not appeal to the teacher to provide help. And even when students do attend to the teacher because he has produced talk, as in extracts 6 and 7, they may quickly switch back to disattention. Through disattending the teacher, the students co-construct the teacher-as-observer and can be seen as doing making themselves and their discussion available for the teacher's observation.

## RESPONDING AS TEACHER-AS-OBSERVER

In extract 6, by asking two of the students whether they have said their opinions yet, one thing the teacher does is display his understanding of the current state of task completion among these students. He thus demonstrates that he has, to some extent, been paying attention to what has been happening in this group. Something similar can be said in relation to extract 3, when the teacher's question, formulated as an upshot of a student's answer to another student's question, demonstrates that he has been paying attention to what the students are saying. He thus demonstrates that he is not just an observer, but an attentive observer. Another way that the teacher has of displaying his understanding is through claims of understanding of student talk. In particular, he uses nodding, smiling, and subdued laughter

to claim understanding of what a student has said. These responses are actions of a non-addressed participant that do not make a response from a student conditionally relevant.

For example, in frames 6 to 8 of extract 3 above (prior to the teacher asking his first question), when S<sub>3</sub> answers another student's question with "no one," this elicits laughter from other students. It also, though, elicits laughter from the observing teacher, in the form of an audible outbreath and bending forward slightly. The teacher is visibly responding to what this student has said in the same way as the other students, by treating it as a laughable. The teacher's laughter claims understanding of what it is about S<sub>3</sub>'s answer that can be appropriately responded to in this way. Compared to the students' laughter, though, the teacher's laughter is relatively subdued, consisting of one audible outbreath and some body movement. The students in this group do not respond to the teacher's laughter by reorienting to him and the teacher starts to move away (frame 8).

A teacher response without laughter can be found in extract 4. In this extract, S<sub>3</sub> is considering a question that S<sub>4</sub> has asked him, while the teacher observes (frames 3, 4, and 5). S<sub>3</sub> then responds to the question by lowering his hand from his face and nodding, which elicits a response token and a nod from S<sub>4</sub> (frame 6), after which S<sub>3</sub> shifts his gaze to him. For his part, the teacher seems to recognize that S<sub>3</sub> is about to answer, and to claim understanding of what sort of answer it is, by also nodding, with this being started a fraction of a second after S<sub>3</sub> starts to nod. Note, though, that while S<sub>4</sub> responds to S<sub>3</sub>, and while S<sub>3</sub> shifts his gaze to S<sub>4</sub>, nobody responds to the teacher's nodding.

As a final example, extract 8 shows how the teacher can respond to something said in a group that is farther away from the teacher than another group (S<sub>1</sub> and S<sub>2</sub> are not visible).

### *Extract 8*



*Frame 1: Te facing group*



Frame 2: *Te facing group*

S1: I think your=



Frame 3: *Te facing group*

S1: =opinion is=



Frame 4: *Te gz and torso left, moves back, off cam*

S1: =sa:me (0.3)=



Frame 5: *Te off cam*

S1: =her opinion. (0.7)



*Frame 6: Tè into cam, gz and torso facing diff group*

S2: no.



*Frame 7: Tè facing same group, smiles*



*Frame 8: Tè smiling, moves forward*



*Frame 9: Tè moving forward, smiling, glance right*



*Frame 10: T<sub>e</sub> moving forward, smiling*



*Frame 11: T<sub>e</sub> moving forward, gz left to diff group*



*Frame 12: T<sub>e</sub> gz on group, turns left*

In this extract, the teacher is observing one group (in the left foreground) from a relatively immobile position (frames 1 to 4). While he is doing this, a student in a different group (in the right foreground) addresses a comment to another student (frames 2 to 5), to which the other student responds (frame 6). While this comment is being articulated, the teacher shifts his gaze to the direction of this other group (frame 4), but then steps back and out of the camera shot (frames 4, 5, and 6). When he moves back into the camera shot (frames 6 and 7), he is clearly facing this other group and starts walking toward them (frames 7 to 12). He also starts smiling and holds this smile for a few seconds (frames 7 to 10). With the timing of the shift of gaze, this smiling is understandable in this sequential context as responsive to

the exchange between the students in the other group. The teacher can thus be understood as responding to the students' exchange, but again in a way that does not make a student response conditionally relevant.

There are responsive actions that the teacher can do without ceasing to be an observer. In the context of this student discussion task, one thing the teacher accomplishes with such actions is to claim that he is an attentive observer, paying attention to what the students are doing and following what they are saying.

### OBSERVER SENSITIVITY TO STUDENT TALK

Finally, another means that the teacher has of displaying his understanding is through the timing of moving away from a group, which can show sensitivity to the current state of a turn or sequence, and thus, to some extent, demonstrate rather than merely claim understanding. Extract 9, which continues from extract 2 above and preserves the numbering of frames, shows the teacher's sensitivity to possible turn completion.

#### *Extract 9*



*Frame 8: Te continues swaying left, gaze on same group*



*Frame 9: Te mostly still, gaze on same group*



Frame 10: T<sub>e</sub> starts walking, gaze on same group

(0.9)

S3: I=



Frame 11: T<sub>e</sub> walks forward, stops, gaze on same group

S3: =think he::=



Frame 12: T<sub>e</sub> sways to his right, gaze on same group

S3: =(1.0)=



Frame 13: T<sub>e</sub> mostly still, gaze on same group

S3: =↑she (0.8)=



Frame 14: *Te mostly still, gaze on same group*

S3: =an:d he=



Frame 15: *Te mostly still, gaze on same group*

S3: =(1.0)=



Frame 16: *Te mostly still, gaze on same group, tilts head slightly*

S3: =(can) talked more.  
(0.2)



Frame 17: *Te sways to his left, gaze on same group*

S4: m: .  
S2: (yeah yeah) .



Frame 18: *T<sub>e</sub> walks forward, gaze on same group*

(0.5)

S3: hxmm ((throat clearing))



Frame 19: *T<sub>e</sub> walks forward, turns gaze to front*



Frame 20: *T<sub>e</sub> walks forward, mostly disappears on right*

(0.2)

S3: she- (0.6)=



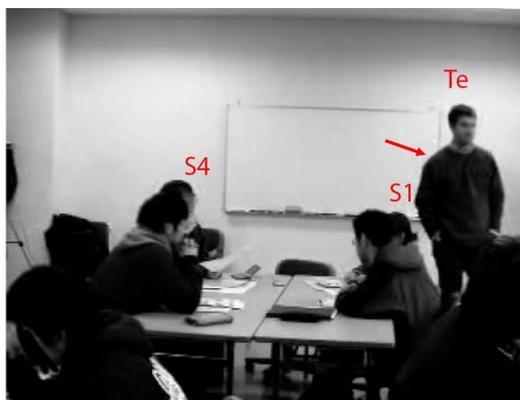
Frame 21: *T<sub>e</sub> disappears on right*

As shown in extract 2, at the start of this extract, the teacher has been observing this group from a relatively immobile position for a few seconds. He is starting to sway to his left, but keeps his gaze on this group (frames 8 and 9). He starts walking (frame 10), but then stops again (frame 11), still maintaining his gaze. Then, staying relatively immobile except for some slight swaying, the teacher maintains his gaze on this group for several seconds (frames 12 to 16). Though at the start of this extract, the teacher seems to be about to move away, he thus shifts to being relatively immobile again as he continues to observe this group. This seems to be responsive to the talk of S<sub>3</sub>, who starts articulating an opinion in frame 10. The articulation of this opinion contains some disfluencies, that is, sometimes lengthy pauses (frames 12, 13, and 15), sound stretches (frames 11 and 14), and a word replacement (frames 11 and 13). When S<sub>3</sub> reaches possible completion (grammatically and prosodically) of this turn in frame 16, the teacher starts moving again, first swaying to his left (frames 17 and 18), then starting to walk forward (frames 18 and 19), and finally turning his gaze away from this group as he continues walking forward (frames 19 and 20). While he thus maintains observation of this group past the possible completion of S<sub>3</sub>'s turn, his initiation of moving away is nicely fitted to this possible turn completion. I am not trying to argue that possible turn completion triggers the initiation of movement away, but rather that the teacher finds in possible turn completion a propitious opportunity to move away, and thus that he is sensitive to the current state of talk.

Extract 4 above shows a similar case, but here the sequence, and not just the turn, is possibly complete. As discussed above, when S<sub>3</sub>, after several seconds of consideration, responds to S<sub>4</sub>'s earlier question by nodding, the teacher also nods and S<sub>4</sub> produces a sequence-closing third (frame 6). Even though in fact S<sub>4</sub> goes on to produce more talk (frame 8), this is a point where the sequence is possibly closed and the further talk of S<sub>4</sub> may be either a continuation of this sequence or the initiation of a new sequence. On his part, the teacher not only nods, but also starts moving away from this group (frames 7, 8, and 9) and shifts his gaze to a different group (frames 10 and 11). As with extract 9, I do not want to argue that possible sequence completion causes or triggers the teacher to move away, but rather that the teacher is sensitive to possible sequence completion and finds in it a propitious opportunity to move to a different group.

Extract 10 shows how the teacher may be sensitive to a student doing what has been projected, rather than just to possible completion.

#### *Extract 10*



S1: that's all.

S4: m::.

Frame 2: *Te walking forward, turns head and gz to group*



Frame 3: *Te turns torso toward group, gz on group*



Frame 1: *Te walking forward, gz forward*



Frame 4: Tè stops moving forward, gz on group

(0.8)

S4: uh=



Frame 5: Tè steps to his right, gz on group

S4: =: :m.



Frame 6: Tè immobile, gz on group

(Frames 7 to 14 (8 seconds) removed, as Tè maintains his position and gaze.)



Frame 15: Tè immobile, gz on group



Frame 16: *Te turns to his left, takes step; S<sub>4</sub> gz to S<sub>1</sub>*

(0.3)

S<sub>4</sub>: if: ...



Frame 17

In this extract, the teacher is walking away with his gaze forward as one student in the group to his right (*S<sub>1</sub>*, closest to the teacher but partially obscured) claims to have completed her opinion and *S<sub>4</sub>* (across from *S<sub>1</sub>*) responds (frame 1). *S<sub>4</sub>*'s response does not project more talk and a fairly long silence emerges (frames 2, 3, and 4). This silence seems to attract the attention of the teacher, who turns his head and gaze toward this group (frames 2 and 3), then turns his torso toward this group (frames 3 and 4), and then stops walking, steps to his right, and takes up a relatively immobile position (frames 4, 5 and 6). As the teacher is making these adjustments in his movement, *S<sub>4</sub>* projects more talk with an elongated "uhm." There is then a prolonged silence, over 10 seconds long, during which the teacher maintains his relatively immobile position (frames 6 and 15, and frames not shown). Finally, *S<sub>4</sub>* turns his gaze toward *S<sub>1</sub>* and produces "if," projecting continuation. Upon this, the teacher turns away from this group and starts to walk away (frames 16 and 17). Here, instead of an orientation to turn or sequence completion, it appears to be the silence from this group that attracts the teacher's attention and then the continued, and very long, silence, after *S<sub>4</sub>* has projected more talk, that provides a reason for the teacher to maintain his observation of this group. Once *S<sub>4</sub>* ends this silence by starting to produce the projected talk, the teacher begins moving away.

When the teacher moves away from a group, then, he often displays sensitivity, in different ways, to the state of talk among the students. One thing this may accomplish is to provide a further display of understanding of the students' interaction, indicating his attent-

ive observation of the students' task performance. (See also Hindmarsh, 2010; Svinhufvud, 2018.) Again, the teacher shows that he is not only an observer, but an attentive observer.

## DISCUSSION

Depending on the sort of classroom and the current activity, there are, as mentioned in the introduction, a variety of recognizable ways that the teacher-in-the-classroom can do being the teacher. In the current activity in this classroom, the students are engaged in group work, namely, a discussion task which they are expected to conduct in English. The teacher does being the teacher by moving around the classroom and observing the different groups.<sup>7</sup> Through the way that he observes the different groups, from producing and maintaining *displays of just observing*, to producing observer responses which both claim understanding and do not make a student response relevant, to showing sensitivity to the state of talk without himself intervening in that talk, to addressing talk to particular students, the teacher contributes to the construction of himself as an attentive observer. Importantly, this status as teacher-as-observer is co-constructed, as the students also contribute by not treating the teacher as an addressee and also not trying to obscure what they are doing. The students thus make their task performance available for observation by the teacher. As shown in extracts 3 and 6, the teacher may temporarily suspend a display of just observing to interact with students he has been observing, but as it turns out, these two extracts show the only times that the teacher does this during this activity. (This does not include his announcement to the class in extract 7 or how he announces to the class the end of the discussion task and a move to an activity involving the teacher interacting with the students as a class.)<sup>8</sup> And in extract 6, the teacher's question is not responded to as a question but rather as an instruction for the students to continue their interaction among themselves.

Through their actions, including disattention to the teacher, the participants co-construct the teacher-as-observer. This involves making use of the affordances of the spatial organization of the classroom, but it is also a contingent outcome of the how the students interact in their groups, how they do not interact with the teacher, how they allow themselves to be observed, and how the teacher conducts himself as an observer. The co-construction of the teacher-as-observer contributes to the constitution of each group's interactional space as a kind of mini-panopticon (Foucault, 1995) within which the students' task performance can be observed. It is important to note that this could be done differently, if, for example, students tried to obscure the teacher's view (Jakonen, 2018) or the teacher actively intervened in the discussions.

I suggested in the introduction that by looking carefully at how teacher-as-observer is co-constructed, it may become possible to gain an enhanced understanding of what it means for a teacher to observe students as they engage in a classroom task. The analysis above helps to

7 He also does being the teacher in other ways, such as announcing that the time for the task will soon come to an end in extract 7.

8 This second announcement is prefaced by some brief non-verbal interaction between a student and the teacher, possibly showing how students may anticipate the end of a current activity (Hauser, 2007).

unpack “teacher-as-observer” as a gloss of this teacher’s status during student group work. Specifically, the analysis shows how the teacher-as-observer can claim and demonstrate understanding of the observed interaction and thus demonstrate—to the students in the first instance, and secondarily to the analyst as a very different sort of observer—that he is more than just an observer, he is an attentive observer. He is also, from the students’ perspective, a legitimate and possibly welcome, or at least not unwelcome, observer. This teacher-as-observer—that is, this teacher, in this classroom, with these students, during this instance of student group work—is co-constructed as a *good* teacher, who is attentive to what the students are doing as they work together and whose attention is legitimized by the students.

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