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Grammar on the Fly: L1-Mediated Explanations in a Young Learner Classroom


Gülce Kalaycı Karagün

Hacettepe University, Turkey

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6765-8542>

Hatice Ergül

Hacettepe University, Turkey

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0494-432X>

Abstract

Research on grammar explanation in young language learner (YLL) classrooms remains limited, particularly in contexts where learners' first language (L1) is routinely used as a medium of instruction (MI). Addressing this gap, this study examines the sequential organisation of on-the-fly grammar explanations in YLL classroom interactions, focusing on how such explanations emerge in response to locally occasioned interactional contingencies rather than as pre-planned instructional events. Adopting a conversation analytic (CA) approach, this study draws on approximately 40 hours of video-recorded classroom interactions collected from three YLL classrooms at a private language school in Ankara, Türkiye. Through a detailed single-case analysis, this study traces how a grammar explanation sequence is initiated by an explicit student request and collaboratively developed through teacher–student interaction over multiple turns. The analysis shows that the grammar explanation is accomplished through a systematically organised sequence comprising an opening, core, and closing, consistent with prior CA research on instructional activities. Distinctively, however, the sequence is student-initiated and emerges prior to any observable error, a trajectory that remains under-documented in CA studies of grammar teaching. The findings further demonstrate that learners display interactional agency not only by launching explanations but also by shaping their pedagogical unfolding, including proposing instructional resources. Throughout the sequence, L2–L1 translation is recurrently mobilised as a central interactional resource through which grammatical understanding is publicly displayed and assessed, while the teacher's embodied conduct scaffolds meaning and manages participation, particularly in coordinating competing students' responses. By documenting how grammar explanation is interactionally negotiated and multimodally accomplished in an L1-mediated YLL classroom, this study challenges monolingual assumptions that continue to inform dominant accounts of early language pedagogy. This highlights the need for further CA research on L1 use, learner agency, and translation practices across diverse instructional contexts to develop a more empirically grounded understanding of grammar instruction in early language learning.

Keywords: Conversation Analysis, L2 Grammar Explanation, L1 as a Medium of Instruction, Young Language Learners

Introduction

Second language (L2) learning emerges in and through interaction (Ellis, 2000), making classroom interaction central to understanding teaching and learning in L2 contexts (Walsh, 2006; Sert 2015). This perspective has given rise to CA-SLA (Markee, 2000; Kasper & Wagner, 2011), which adopts a micro-detailed, sequential, and emic approach to reveal how participants accomplish social actions, including language learning behaviours, through real-time interactions (Markee, 2008).

Central to this view is Walsh's (2011) notion of Classroom Interactional Competence (CIC): teachers' and learners' ability to use interaction as a

tool for mediating and assisting learning (p. 158). CIC encompasses key features, including maximising interactional space, shaping learner contributions, effective eliciting, instructional idiolect, and interactional awareness (Sert, 2015). The alignment between these features and pedagogical focus determines the extent to which classroom interaction fosters learning, with language choice emerging as a critical decision (Walsh 2006, 2011).

Despite this growing body of research, CA studies focusing on L1 use and grammar explanation in young language learner (YLL) contexts remain scarce. Responding to Walsh's (2011) call for research in different settings, this study examines the sequential organisation of grammar explanations in YLL classroom interactions where L1 is used as a medium of instruction.

Teaching English to Young Learners

Young language learners (YLLs), defined as children aged five to twelve years (Cameron, 2001; Ellis, 2013), are characterised by distinctive developmental features that are central to language teaching practices. Children tend to learn language implicitly, interpreting purposeful actions rather than focusing on grammatical structures (Cameron 2012). Their limited ability to grasp abstract concepts such as grammar (Harmer, 2007) means that their learning involves substantial implicit knowledge but limited explicit awareness (DeKeyser, 2018). Therefore, empirical studies are needed to understand how grammar instruction is implemented in YLL classroom interactions.

Spoken language serves as the primary medium of learning for YLLs due to their limited literacy skills (Cameron, 2012), with their first language remaining their primary communicative resource in the early stages (Enever, 2018). While communicative language teaching has promoted monolingual approaches (Turnbull, 2018), scholars argue that these lack empirical support and may be pedagogically inefficient for YLLs (Cummins, 2007). Consequently, language choice, particularly the strategic use of L1, has become a key issue in YLL pedagogy.

Use of L1

English language teaching has historically been shaped by monolingual ideologies assuming that L2 should be taught without recourse to learners' L1 (Hall & Cook, 2012, 2013; Littlewood & Yu, 2011). This approach aims to maximise L2 exposure; however, many EFL teachers continue to incorporate L1 and translation strategies despite institutional requirements (Arystanbek, 2023), often experiencing professional conflict as a result.

The reconceptualisation of multilingualism, particularly with the "multilingual turn" (Conteh & Meier, 2014; May, 2014), has led to a growing recognition of L1's pedagogical value in EFL classrooms. Language learners are now more commonly viewed as multiple-language users rather than failed monolingual speakers (Belz, 2003). Within this paradigm, deliberate L1 use (Cook, 2001) is seen as a resource that can strengthen teaching practices and reduce power asymmetry in L2 classrooms.

Research provides empirical support for strategic L1 use, such as clarifying abstract concepts, explaining grammatical structures (Arystanbek, 2023), introducing vocabulary (Kapoyannis, 2019), and increasing metalinguistic awareness (Cenoz & Santos, 2020). L1 also provides affective benefits, including reducing anxiety (Bruen & Kelly, 2017) and increasing engagement (Colina & Lafford, 2017). Nevertheless, many teachers face institutional constraints regarding L1 integration (Khelalfa & Kellil, 2023).

Despite its prevalence, extensive L1 use in L2 classroom interactions remains underexplored, even though it reflects the daily reality in many classrooms worldwide.

Grammar Explanation

Grammar instruction remains controversial in L2 teaching and learning (Nassaji, 2017), with "grammar explanation" emerging as a productive phenomenon for understanding interactional patterns in L2 instruction (Hudson, 2011; Majlesi, 2018; Matsumoto & Dobs, 2017; Rosborough, 2014; Smotrova, 2014). Grammar explanations can take various forms: defining grammatical forms (Dalton-Puffer, 2007; Käätä, 2021), presenting rules and

exemplifications (Lee, 2004), offering embodied demonstrations (Lazaraton, 2004; Matsumoto & Dobs, 2017), or using translation (Stoewer & Musk, 2019).

Previous studies have suggested that grammar explanations display three key characteristics: (1) sequential organisation, (2) intentional or incidental emergence, and (3) monologic or dialogical structure. Sequentially, explanations follow a three-part structure: an opening that identifies a learning gap, a core that delivers the explanation, and a closing that involves acknowledgement (Fasel Lauzon, 2015). Planned explanations are teacher-initiated with prepared materials, whereas unplanned explanations emerge in response to learners' needs. Dialogic explanations actively engage learners, prompting collaborative knowledge construction, whereas monologic explanations passively position students (Koole, 2010).

CA research has shown that grammar explanations draw on both verbal and embodied resources, with gestures playing a central role in meaning making (Hudson, 2011; Matsumoto & Dobs, 2017; Nakatsukasa, 2013; Smotrova, 2014). During the opening phase, teachers employ landmarking, using verbal, embodied or visual resources to highlight problematic elements (Majlesi, 2018). In the core, catchments, and repeated embodied movements, target structures such as plurality (Smotrova, 2014), past perfect tense (Matsumoto & Dobs, 2017), or prepositions of place (Nakatsukasa, 2013) are emphasised. Research suggests a preference for dialogic explanations, as they promote learner engagement (Majlesi, 2018; Matsumoto & Dobs, 2017). The closing phase typically involves student repetitions, acknowledgement tokens, or embodied actions, such as nodding (Matsumoto & Dobs, 2017; Smotrova, 2014).

In summary, the literature reviewed here reveals several intersecting trends and a clear empirical gap. Research on teaching English to YLLs foregrounds the developmental and cognitive characteristics that distinguish YLLs from adult learners; however, fine-grained CA research documenting how grammar instruction is accomplished in YLL classroom interactions remains limited. At the same time, while the pedagogical value of L1 use

in language classrooms has received increasing recognition, much of this work has focused on identifying discrete functions of L1 use rather than examining instructional settings in which L1 operates as the primary medium of interaction. In parallel, CA studies of grammar explanation have provided detailed accounts of the sequential and multimodal organisation of instructional sequences; however, this body of research has predominantly examined adult learner contexts where instruction is conducted in the target language. Taken together, the intersection of YLL pedagogy, L1 as a medium of instruction, and the interactional organisation of grammar explanations remains underexplored.

This study addresses this gap by examining the sequential organisation and interactional accomplishment of on-the-fly grammar explanations in a YLL classroom in Türkiye. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following research questions.

- How are on-the-fly grammar explanations sequentially organised in YLL classroom interactions?
- What interactional resources do teachers employ to deliver on-the-fly grammar explanations in YLL classroom interactions?

By documenting L1-mediated grammar explanation practices, this study contributes to CA-SLA research on instructional sequences and offers empirical insights into the interactional realities of early language-learning contexts.

Methodology

The data for this study are part of a corpus of video recordings of three YLL classrooms comprising approximately 40 classroom hours, collected at a private language school in Ankara between April and May 2019. The participants were second- and fourth-grade students who attended school on weekends. Each group received four 40-minute English as an Additional Language (EAL) lessons per week.

Two Turkish EFL teachers conducted the main lessons (three hours per week) using predominantly teacher-fronted instruction, while two international teachers delivered speaking classes (one hour per week) with a minimised L1 use. In the speaking classes, Turkish was deliberately minimised to maximise students' exposure to the target

language. While the Turkish teachers' classes were predominantly teacher-fronted, the international teachers' lessons followed a more student-centred and less constrained classroom interaction structure.

Data analysis was conducted using Conversation Analysis (CA), a social-scientific approach that "aims to describe, analyse and understand talk as a basic and constitutive feature of human social life" (Sidnell, 2013, p. 1). CA examines how participants orient themselves to each other's talk in interaction (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998) and how intersubjectivity is achieved through the organisation of turns, adjacency pairs, preference structures, and repair mechanisms. CA offers several methodological advantages: it adopts a micro-analytic lens, emphasises sequential organisation, relies on a bottom-up approach, and takes an emic perspective, all of which provide a nuanced understanding of how teaching and learning are co-constructed in talk-in-interaction (Sert, 2017). A single case analysis (Raymond & Heritage, 2006) was conducted to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of grammar explanation within the local classroom context. This approach allows for an extended, fine-grained account of how grammar explanations are produced and organised in YLL classroom interactions.

Following data collection, the recordings were viewed repeatedly from an unmotivated analytic stance to identify naturally occurring interactional phenomena. The data were then transcribed using Jeffersonian transcription conventions (Appendix A), capturing multimodal verbal and nonverbal features of interaction, including pauses, overlaps, and prosodic elements (e.g. pitch, stress, and speech rate). Selected representative excerpts were subsequently refined using the multimodal transcription conventions proposed by Mondada (2018) (see Appendix B). This system allows for a fine-grained representation of participants' embodied conduct, such as gaze, body posture, and gesture, which are integral to the organisation of interaction. Where relevant, English translations are provided on a separate line in italics to avoid confusion and preserve the integrity of multilingual interactions.

Analysis and Findings

This section presents a detailed analysis of how on-the-fly grammar explanations are occasioned and locally managed within classroom interactions. Drawing on an extract from a lesson on prepositions of place, the analysis examines a moment in which a student's explicit request for a grammar explanation prompts the teacher to momentarily depart from the planned activity trajectory. The analysis traces how this shift is sequentially organised and accomplished multimodally through the coordinated use of verbal, embodied, and visual resources.

The interaction illustrates how grammar explanation emerges as an interactionally collaborative accomplishment, with meaning negotiated between the teacher and students over multiple turns. In particular, the analysis shows how the teacher integrated a range of interactional resources to sustain and develop the explanation sequence in response to student contributions. To enable close inspection of the sequential unfolding of the interaction, the transcript is presented in smaller segments that are analysed in turn.

Excerpt 1

01	Tea:	+sayfa otuz↓ (.) page thirty +Tea looks at the book-->>
02	Sts	*biraz da eski bilgileri tekrarlayalım let's remember the previous knowledge a little (0.7) Sts look at their books and turn over-->
03	Tea:	sayfa otuzdaki ikinci alıştırmaya* on page thirty, second exercise -->*
04	Sts	baksın *herke:↑s Look at it everybody Sts look at the relevant exercise-->04.12
05	Sar:	orayı yapıp size geleceğiz upon doing that, we will come to you
06	Amy:	Aaa:: [bunları unuttu::m I have forgotten these
07	Kev:	[>ben anlamadım< I do not understand
08	Tea:	şimdi hatırlayacağız, merak etmeyin↓ now we will remember, do not worry
09	Kev:	ben de unuttum↓ I have forgotten either



10	Amy:	ahah
11	Tea:	hatırlayacağız↓ we will remember
12	Sar:	valla ben hatırlamıyorum↓* honestly, i do not remember-->*
13		(0.8)
14	Tea:	>şimdi<öncediyeceğizki:↑ now first we will say that
15		(1.7)
16	Tea:	+orada ne va:↑r+ what is in there +Tea looks at the page more closely+
17		(0.8)
18	Tea:	bakın↓ ikinciresimde↑ look second picture
19		>ikinci alıştırmadaki ikinci resimde< second picture in the second exercise
20		beyaz bir köpek var↓ gördüñüz mü↑ there is a white dog do you see
21	Kev:	humm humm
22	Luk:	öğretmenim teacher
23		+ +Tea looks at Luk--> 23.28
24	Sar:	there is [a↑:
25	Luk:	[er: şe:y, şuradan video açıp- Well. open a video there
26		er::m neydi↑ onlarla ilgili what was about those
27		bir video seyredelim,ondan sonra↑ lets watch a video, then
28	Tea:	o↑ in front of, in:, (.) [on mü↑+ is it -->+
29	Luk:	[evet evet yes yes
30	Kev:	evet, o↓ yes, it is




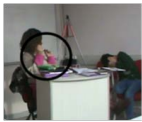
The teacher begins with an instructional frame in lines 01–04, directing students to review prior knowledge and look at a specific page. To initiate, the teacher specifies the page number by saying “sayfa otuz↓” (page 30) in Turkish. In the same turn, she explicitly indicates that they will revise the previous knowledge by saying “biraz da eski bilgileri tekrarlayalım” (let us remember the

previous knowledge a little). Following 0.7-second of silence, the teacher asks students to look at the exercise on page thirty by grounding the task in shared physical referents. The students demonstrate their active engagement in the task through various interactions in lines 05–12. In line 05, Sar signals her involvement by enquiring about the procedural steps to follow, thereby aligning her participation with the instructional agenda. Similarly, Amy and Kev acknowledged their challenges in recalling prior knowledge in lines 06, 07, and 09. The teacher mitigates potential embarrassment about forgetting by saying “şimdi hatırlayacağız, merak etmeyin↓” (Now, we will remember, do not worry) and “hatırlayacağız↓” (we will remember) in line 11, to maintain a supportive learning environment. Following a 0.8-second silence, the teacher’s expression of “>şimdi< önce diyeceğiz ki:↑” (now, first we will say that) in Turkish in line 14 fulfils a transition to the main activity and signals an upcoming explanation sequence, which is followed by a 1.7-second silence. In the following line, the teacher redirects the instructional move and invites students to identify what they see on the page by asking “orada ne va:↑r” (what is in there) in Turkish, and she reinforces the task’s visual focus with a gaze towards the page. A 0.8-second pause provides students with an opportunity to respond, yet no one takes up the turn. In line 18, the teacher takes the floor and explicitly asserts that there is a white dog in the second picture by saying “>ikinci alıştırmadaki ikinci resimde< beyaz bir köpek var↓” (In the second picture in the second exercise, there is a white dog) in Turkish and finalizes her turn by saying “gördüñüz mü↑” (Have you seen it?) with a rising intonation, which functions as a comprehension check to ensure that the students are following the task. In line 21, Kev aligns with the teacher’s turn by saying “humm humm”. In the following line, Luk claims the floor telling “öğretmenim” (teacher), and the teacher shifts her gaze to Luk. Meanwhile, Sar begins to construct a response in English, yet Luk’s interjection in line 25 interrupts it. Indeed, Luk draws the teacher’s attention bidding for the turn in line 25; therefore, it is Luk who goes for the following turn, and he introduces a proposal by saying “şuradan video açıp-” (open a video there) but interrupts

himself mid-sentence to initiate a self-repair “er::m neydi↑” (what was it) asking for confirmation or clarification of the vocabulary. Here, Luk shifts the focus of the activity requesting a grammar explanation, specifying the instructional resource, but his interruption mid-sentence to initiate a self-repair with a rising intonation marks it as a request for assistance, inviting teacher or peer intervention. In response, the teacher lists some of the prepositions of place relevant to the task and poses a question to clarify whether Luk refers to them. Overlapping with the teacher’s turn, Luk affirms quickly, and Kev explicitly aligns with him in line 30.

Excerpt 2



31	Tea:	neydi↑+[i:n #(.)+ what was +Tea puts the pencil in her fist+ #fig.1
32	Sar:	[in 7+o:[n# +Tea puts the pencil on her fist--> #fig.2
		 Figure 1
		 Figure 2
33	Tea:	[on
34	Sts:	[on+ -->+
35	Sar:	un[de:r
36	Tea:	+ [under +Tea puts the pencil under her fist-->
37	Sts:	[under,+ -->+
38	Sts:	+ #in front of,+ ~#behind~
	Tea	+Tea puts the pencil in front of her fist+ ~Tea puts the pencil behind her fist~ #fig.3 #fig.4




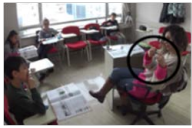
39		□ #next to, □ ∂#between∂ □ Tea puts the pencil next to her fist □ ∂tea holds her head between her hands∂ #fig.5 #fig.6
		 Figure 3
		 Figure 4
		 Figure 5
		 Figure 6



The teacher uses the past tense marker -di attached to “ne” (what), which indicates RPLE (Can Daşkın, 2017; Can Daşkın & Hatipoğlu, 2019), signalling a focus on grammatical recall. Similarly, she brings “i:n” into focus through elongation, and displays its meaning by placing the pencil in her fist, which provides a visual cue to contextualise the grammatical concept. Overlapping with the teacher’s turn, Sar starts to list prepositions of place in English to whom the other students join in line 34 after the teacher and Sar say “on” in overlapping turns in lines 32 and 33 while the teacher is demonstrating its meaning by placing the pencil on her fist. Subsequently, Sar preemptively introduces the next preposition, “under” displaying familiarity with the grammatical sequence and anticipating the teacher’s next move. Consistently, in overlapping turns, the teacher and the other students repeat “under” while the teacher performs the corresponding gesture, aligning verbal instruction with physical demonstration in lines 36 and 37. In the following lines, the teacher continues to display each preposition of place with a gesture,


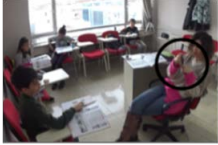

and accordingly, the students recite a sequence of prepositions “in front of”, “behind”, “next to”, and “between”, by demonstrating their internalisation of grammatical patterns.

Excerpt 3

		
		Figure 7
40	Tea:	#>lukascığım buraya bakman lazım< Lukascığım you should look at this #fig.7
41	Luk:	A[ma↑ but
42	Tea:	[in
43	Luk:	ama başım ağrıdı↓ but I have a headache
44	Tea:	°niye° why
45	Luk:	şurası ağrıdı↓ \$bilmiyorum bir anda oldu\$ here is aching I do not know it happened suddenly
46	Tea:	tamam bak↑ +IN↑#, okay look +Tea puts the pencil into her fist--> #fig.8
		
		Figure 8
47	Luk:	°içinde°+ In -->+
48	Tea:	+on↑# +Tea puts the pencil on her fist--> #fig.9

		
		Figure 9
49	Luk:	üstünde\$+ on -->+
50	Tea:	+under# +tea puts the pencil under her fist--> #fig.10
		
		Figure 10
51	Luk:	>\$altında\$<+ Under -->+
52	Tea:	+in front of↑# +Tea puts the pencil in front of her fist--> #fig.11
		
		Figure 11
53	Luk:	er::m >önünde<+ in front of -->+
54	Tea:	+behind# +tea puts the pencil behind her fist--> #fig.12
		
		Figure 12
55	Luk:	er:m >yanımda<+ next to -->+

56	Amy: Tea	+>arkasında<+# behind +Tea shakes the pencil behind her fist--> #fig.13
		 Figure 13
57	Sar:	arkasında::↑+ Behind -->+
58	Kev:	bitişiginde↑ next to
59	Luk:	bit- ya↑ni nex- I mean
60	Tea:	+bak kale:m- bak buraya↓# look pencil look here
61		(0.8) +Tea puts the pencil in front of her fist--> #fig.14
		 Figure 14
62	Tea:	in front of↑
63	Luk:	a- e-
64	Tea:	ÖNÜNDE in front of
65	Luk:	önünde+ in front of -->+
66	Tea:	+be<hind>↑#
67		(0.8) +Tea puts the pencil behind her fist--> #fig.15

		 Figure 15
68	Luk:	ar- ((tea nods-->)) kasında↑+ be- hind -->+
69	Tea:	+next to↑# +Tea puts the pencil next to her fist--> #fig.16
		 Figure 16
70	Luk:	yanında+ next to -->+
71	Tea:	+between# +Tea holds her head between her hands--> #fig.17
		 Figure 17
72	Luk:	>arasın<dA+ Between -->+
73	Tea:	arasında (.) şimdi↑ tek yapmanız >gerekten between now only thing that we need to do
74		kafanız karışır ben orada< if you get confused
75		yardımcı olacağım↓ I will help there
76		merak etmeyin do not worry

As shown in the figure, Luk does not look at the teacher while she is explaining the prepositions

of place. Upon noticing this, the teacher explicitly draws his attention by addressing him in Turkish by saying “>lukcuğum buraya bakman lazım<” (My dear Luk, you should look at here). Here, the use of the diminutive form “lukcuğum” (my dear Luk) establishes a supportive tone, softening the directive and fostering a positive teacher-student relationship. Following a small irrelevant talk between lines 41 and 45, the teacher redirects Luk’s focus to the grammatical explanation by saying “tamam bak↑” (okay, look) and articulating “IN↑” with a rising intonation and a louder tone of voice in line 46. This verbal cue is accompanied by the gesture of putting the pencil into her fist. Through this combination, the teacher not only re-engages Luk but also emphasises the target preposition “in”. Luk treats her turn as a request for translation, and he responds quietly with the Turkish equivalent by saying “°içinde°” (in). It seems that Luk aligns with the teacher’s instructional goal, signaling attentiveness and comprehension as the teacher continues to the next preposition “on↑” in line 48 by maintaining the pattern of providing the grammatical item along with a corresponding gesture. In the following line, Luk again provides the Turkish equivalent, “\$üstünde\$” (on) marked with enthusiasm, which shows Luk’s engagement and alignment with the task despite the continued reliance on L1. Subsequently, in line 50, the teacher introduces “under” in the same structured manner, pairing the verbal explanation with a corresponding gesture. This consistency reinforced the grammatical pattern for the students. Indeed, Luk responds with the Turkish translation “>\$altında\$<” (under) articulated at a faster pace, indicating increasing confidence or familiarity with the task. In line 52, by maintaining a consistent pattern of verbalisation along with a corresponding gesture, the teacher introduces “in front of↑” with a rising intonation. In response, Luk initiates his turn with an elongated turn-holding device “er::m” showing his hesitation, yet he provides the correct Turkish translation “önünde” (in front of) in the same TCU. In line 54, the teacher continues the structured pattern of presenting prepositions, pairing the word “behind” with the gesture of placing a pencil behind her fist. In the following line, Luk shows his hesitation with an elongated turn holding device “er::m” before

offering a candidate translation “>yanında<” (near), meaning next to rather than behind. Such an incorrect choice could indicate confusion with prepositions rather than a lack of knowledge. In lines 56 and 57, Amy and Sar provide the correct translation of the target preposition, yet in line 58, Kev suggests another incorrect translation “bitişiginde↑” (next to) whose meaning again refers to next to the. Rather than considering Sar’s and Amy’s suggestions, Luk begins to repeat Kev’s answer, however he leaves it unfinished and signals uncertainty by saying “ya↑ni” (I mean). The teacher interrupts the ongoing confusion and redirects Luk’s attention to the place of the pencil by saying “bak kale:m- bak buraya↓” (Look, pencil look here) and shaking the pencil to emphasise the target preposition of place. Following a 0.8-second pause, the teacher moves the pencil in front of her fist and articulates “in front of↑” with a rising intonation, creating a spatial relationship. In line 63, Luk provides a fragmented response reflecting his difficulty in retrieving the target preposition of place, although he had translated this very preposition of place in line 53 previously. Subsequently, the teacher provides the Turkish equivalent “ÖNÜNDE” (in front of) in a louder tone, which Luk repeats to show his understanding. The teacher then turns back to “be<hind>↑” articulating it verbally and demonstrating it with the help of a pencil behind her fist. Following a 0.8-second wait time, Luk begins with a hesitation saying “ar-” (be-) and completes his response with “kasında↑” (hind) after the teacher’s nod. Receiving the expected translation, in line 68, the teacher continues the sequence by articulating “next to↑” with a rising intonation and visualising it by placing the pencil next to her fist. In the following line, Luk replies to her with the Turkish translation “yanında” (near) in a louder tone of voice at the end, showing his confidence. Then, the teacher introduces the preposition “between”, by the help of the corresponding gesture, which Luk replies providing the Turkish translation “<arasin<dA” (between) with a faster pace and louder end, which reflects his growing comfort with the activity as well as self-confidence. In line 73, the teacher confirms Luk’s reply with a repetition and transitions from the explanation phase to guidance on how to proceed, marked by the introductory “şimdi↑” (now), which

draws the students' attention to the next steps in the process. After explaining the target grammar points, the teacher continues to simplify the instructions, making the task manageable and reducing cognitive load by saying "tek yapmanız gereken" (the only thing you need to do), but she leaves it incomplete without giving any instruction about the activity. Instead, she reassures students of support and a low-pressure learning environment by saying "kafanız karışırsa ben orada yardımcı olacağım" (If you get confused, I will help there). Downward intonation signals reliability and calmness. The teacher concludes her turn with "merak etmeyin" (Do not worry), emphasising a supportive and stress-free approach. This phrase, delivered in a stretched and calm tone, further reduces potential anxiety among students.

The analysed excerpt demonstrates how grammar explanations are carried out in a specific instructional setting. A detailed analysis has shown how grammar explanation in YLL classroom interaction could be structured dynamically and co-constructed. This excerpt illustrates a shift in the teacher's instructional goals. First, she begins with a plan to revisit prior knowledge and instructs the students to do a textbook activity. However, she is interrupted by a student's explicit request for a grammar explanation, prompting the teacher to realign her pedagogical approach. At this moment, the student actively shapes the pedagogical goal, demonstrating their agency in directing classroom interaction. This agency is likely supported by the teacher's effective use of affective strategies, such as diminutive forms like "lukcuğum" (My dear Luk) and reassuring comments like "merak etmeyin" (Do not worry) which create a low-anxiety, high-support learning environment conducive to engagement and participation.

The analysis demonstrates that on-the-fly grammar explanation in YLL classroom interaction is accomplished through a systematically organised yet interactionally contingent sequence. These explanation sequences are organised into three interrelated phases: opening, core, and closing, consistent with prior CA accounts of instructional activity. Distinctively, however, the sequences examined here are student-initiated and emerge

prior to any observable error, pointing to an under-documented trajectory in CA research on grammar teaching.

The findings further show that learners exercise interactional agency not only by launching the explanation sequence but also by shaping its pedagogical unfolding, including proposing preferred modes of explanation within an otherwise teacher-fronted framework. Throughout the sequences, L2-L1 translation is recurrently mobilised as an interactional resource through which participants display and check their grammatical understanding.

The teacher's embodied conduct is similarly oriented to the organisation of participation, particularly in coordinating competing student contributions through selective uptake while attending to issues of face. Importantly, despite the extensive use of L1, the interaction can be shown to exhibit features associated with CIC, suggesting that L1-mediated instruction might be compatible with interactionally organised, learning-oriented classroom practices.

The following section situates these findings within the broader CA-SLA and YLL literature and discusses their theoretical and pedagogical implications for future research.

Discussion

Using single case analysis and CA's micro-analytic lens, this study explored how on-the-fly grammar explanation emerges in YLL classroom interaction, specifically how the teacher responded to an explicit student request and the interactional resources she employed. Notably, although the teacher skillfully integrated embodied and material resources, the medium of instruction was the students' L1, which is particularly relevant for understanding how place prepositions are taught to YLLs.

The excerpt illustrates an unplanned, student-initiated grammar explanation referred to as "on-the-fly grammar explanation". The students' requests aligned with the teacher's pedagogical goal of revising previously learned items. Significantly, the students not only requested revisions but also articulated how they preferred the activity to be carried out, specifically, by watching a video. This

extends beyond typical student-initiated sequences documented in CA literature; here, students exercised agency not only over what should be taught but also over how instruction should be delivered, reflecting meta-awareness of instructional resources drawn from prior classroom experience. This level of student voice in shaping pedagogical methodology represents a distinctive finding that warrants further investigation in the context of YLL.

The explanation structure aligns with a dialogical format (Koole 2010). The teacher first clarifies the student's request using verbal and embodied means, then signals that students already possessed relevant knowledge (Can Daşkın, 2017; Lee, 2006) by emphasising the Turkish past tense marker “-di”. By requesting meaning through embodied enactment, the teacher holds the students accountable and encourages epistemic responsibility. The explanation proceeded with embodied enactments (Lazaraton, 2004; Matsumoto & Dobs, 2017), which enhanced engagement and facilitated meaning-making. Notably, the interaction followed a systematic translation practice: the teacher articulated each English preposition while performing a corresponding gesture, and the students responded with Turkish equivalents. This bidirectional use of L1 and L2 functions as a pedagogical translanguaging practice (García & Wei, 2014), where translation serves not merely as a comprehension check but as a primary mode of knowledge display and co-construction as well as a medium of instruction.

The interaction followed a three-part structure: (1) Opening: Students requested an explanation and demonstrated a lack of knowledge. Unlike teacher-initiated or error-induced openings documented in previous studies (Rosborough, 2014; Smotrova, 2014; Matsumoto & Dobs, 2017), here students' landmarking (Majlesi, 2018) occurred before an error was produced, indicating self-awareness and a supportive classroom climate that allowed for learner agency. (2) Core: The teacher initiated a dialogic explanation, encouraging students to propose candidate answers while contextualising the grammar item using verbal, embodied, and material resources. She used catchments to visualize abstract concepts (Matsumoto & Dobs, 2017; Smotrova, 2014), supported by contrast-based exemplifications

(Majlesi, 2018). During the individual sequence with Luk, an interesting peer dynamic emerged: when Luk confused “behind” with “yanında” (next to), multiple students offered competing responses, Amy and Sar provided correct translations while Kev suggested an incorrect equivalent. The teachers' selective uptake and redirecting attention to the embodied demonstration rather than explicitly correcting peer contributions illustrate how teachers navigate multiple knowledge displays while maintaining instructional focus and face-saving practices. (3) Closing: Unlike documented closings, minimal verbal (Smotrova, 2014), expanded (Majlesi, 2018; Rosborough, 2014), or embodied (Matsumoto & Dobs, 2017), this transition to the textbook activity functioned as a task-oriented closing, effectively embedding the explanation within the subsequent learning activity.

These findings offer important insights into YLL classrooms in Japan. First, they challenge the assumption that abstract grammatical concepts should not be addressed explicitly because of learners' cognitive limitations (Harmer, 2007). The data reveal that explicit grammar explanation can occur naturally and meaningfully when supported by interactional and embodied resources, highlighting the need for further CA research on how abstract concepts are taught in early language-learning contexts. Second, unlike previous studies investigating specific L1 functions in YLL classrooms, clarifying abstract concepts, explaining grammar (Arystanbek, 2023), increasing metalinguistic awareness (Cenoz & Santos, 2020), reducing anxiety (Bruen & Kelly, 2017), and enhancing engagement (Colina & Lafford, 2017), in this setting, L1 functions as the primary medium of instruction, with translation operating as the central pedagogical practice through which grammatical knowledge is displayed and assessed.

Despite extensive L1 use, the teacher demonstrates high Classroom Interactional Competence (CIC) (Walsh 2006, 2011). Her practices align with CIC features: maximising interactional space through dialogic explanation, responding to student initiations, effectively eliciting responses using multiple resources, setting and shifting pedagogical goals, and establishing a supportive environment through affective strategies such as diminutive forms

and reassurances. These findings demonstrate that interactional practices mediating learning can be effective, even when instruction is not delivered exclusively in the target language. However, further research should be conducted to understand the interactional organisation of YLL classrooms where students' L1 is used as a medium of instruction.

Conclusion

This study contributes to CA research on on-the-fly grammar explanation in YLL classrooms by documenting a student-initiated, L1-mediated, dialogic explanation sequence. The findings highlight the interactional and multimodal resources through which grammar instruction is negotiated and co-constructed, challenging monolingual assumptions in YLL pedagogy by demonstrating how extensive L1 use, specifically translation as a central pedagogical practice, can coexist with interactionally rich teaching.

Three findings merit particular attention in this study. First, students demonstrated agency not only by requesting grammar explanations but also by suggesting instructional methodologies, reflecting their meta-awareness of pedagogical resources. Second, the teachers' management of competing peer responses during moments of confusion illustrates how instructors navigate multiple knowledge displays while maintaining face-saving practices. Third, systematic translation functioned as the primary mode through which grammatical knowledge was displayed and assessed, positioning L1 not as a fallback but as an integral instructional medium. Taken together, these findings underscore the value of examining grammar instruction as an emergent, interactionally organised activity in YLL classrooms.

Further Research and Pedagogical Implications

This section briefly outlines the directions for future research and pedagogical considerations arising from the study's findings. Consistent with the CA orientation, these points are treated as analytically grounded considerations rather than prescriptive recommendations.

These findings open several avenues for future research, including the role of L1 as a medium of instruction in YLL classrooms, student agency in

shaping pedagogical trajectories, peer dynamics during grammar explanation sequences, and translation as a legitimate pedagogical practice in early language-learning contexts.

As a single-case analysis situated within a specific interactional ecology, this study is not intended to yield generalisable conclusions. In line with CA, the findings are presented as empirically grounded descriptions of how on-the-fly grammar explanations are locally accomplished through participants' moment-by-moment interactional practices. The data were collected in one institutional context—a private language school in Türkiye—and contextual features such as language policy orientations, classroom routines, and learner profiles may differ from those of other YLL settings. In addition, the study does not examine learning outcomes or developmental gains; consistent with CA's epistemological commitments, the analytic focus remains on participants' publicly observable conduct and the organisation of instructional interaction, rather than on evaluating acquisition or instructional effectiveness.

This study offers pedagogical considerations for YLL and EAL contexts. In particular, the student-initiated and pre-error emergence of grammar explanation suggests that instructional relevance may be locally occasioned by learners, even within predominantly teacher-fronted formats. The use of embodied and multimodal resources further highlights how grammatical meaning can be made publicly available and intelligible to YLLs in bilingual interactive environments. Finally, the presence of features associated with CIC despite extensive L1 use invites educators and teacher educators to reconsider the assumption that equates interactional competence with exclusive target-language use, underscoring the value of empirically grounded, interaction-based perspectives on language choice in classroom pedagogy.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Jefferson Transcription Conventions

Adapted from Hutchby and Wooffitt (2008)

(1.8)	Numbers enclosed in parentheses indicate a pause. The number represents the number of seconds of duration of the pause, to one decimal place. A pause of less than 0.2 seconds is marked by (.)
[]	Brackets around portions of utterances show that those portions overlap with a portion of another speaker's utterance.
=	An equal sign is used to show that there is no time lapse between the portions connected by the equal signs. This is used where a second speaker begins their utterance just at the moment when the first speaker finishes.
::	A colon after a vowel or a word is used to show that the sound is extended. The number of colons shows the length of the extension.
(hm, hh)	These are onomatopoetic representations of the audible exhalation of air
.hh	This indicates an audible inhalation of air, for example, as a gasp. The more h's, the longer the in-breath.
?	A question mark indicates that there is slightly rising intonation.
.	A period indicates that there is slightly falling intonation.
,	A comma indicates a continuation of tone.
-	A dash indicates an abrupt cut off, where the speaker stopped speaking suddenly.
↑↓	Up or down arrows are used to indicate that there is sharply rising or falling intonation. The arrow is placed just before the syllable in which the change in intonation occurs.
Under	Underlines indicate speaker emphasis on the underlined portion of the word.
CAPS	Capital letters indicate that the speaker spoke the capitalized portion of the utterance at a higher volume than the speaker's normal volume.
◦	This indicates an utterance that is much softer than the normal speech of the speaker. This symbol will appear at the beginning and at the end of the utterance in question.
><, <>	'Greater than' and 'less than' signs indicate that the talk they surround was noticeably faster, or slower than the surrounding talk.
(would)	When a word appears in parentheses, it indicates that the transcriber has guessed as to what was said, because it was indecipherable on the tape. If the transcriber was unable to guess what was said, nothing appears within the parentheses.
\$C'mon\$	Sterling signs are used to indicate a smiley or jokey voice.
+	marks the onset of a non-verbal action (e.g. shift of gaze, pointing) italics English translation

Appendix B: Multimodal Transcript Conventions (Mondada, 2018)

* *	Gestures and descriptions of embodied actions are delimited between
++	two identical symbols (one symbol per participant)
Δ Δ	and are synchronized with corresponding stretches of talk.
*--->	The action described continues across subsequent lines
---->*	until the same symbol is reached.
>>	The action described begins before the excerpt's beginning.
--->>	The action described continues after the excerpt's end.
.....	Action's preparation.
----	Action's apex is reached and maintained.

»»»»»	Action's retraction.
ric	Participant doing the embodied action is identified when (s)he is not the speaker.
fig	The exact moment at which a screen shot has been taken.
#	is indicated with a specific symbol showing its position within the turn at talk.

Author Details

Gülce Kalaycı Karagün, *Hacettepe University, Turkey*, **Email ID:** gulcekalayci@gmail.com

Hatice Ergül, *Hacettepe University, Turkey*, **Email ID:** hatice.ergul@hacettepe.edu.tr