MAPPING CONVERSATION ANALYSIS STUDIES IN THE ARAB WORLD: APPLICATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract: This scoping review investigates the applications and implications of the conversation analysis approach in the Arab world. Specifically, it examines the implementation of conversation analysis by Arab linguists in both foreign language classrooms and social interaction settings. The review identifies gaps in the relevant literature to guide future research. This scoping review is underpinned by the five-stage framework developed by Arksey and O'Malley. The findings reveal that, compared to non-Arab contexts, the literature on this topic in the Arab world is scarce, but there is a growing interest among Arab linguists. The majority of studies reviewed were conducted in college-level English classes, and there is a dearth of studies in school contexts. The studies were categorized based on themes, including the implementation of conversation analysis, context, educational level, type of methodology, and the journal. The findings from interaction in foreign language classrooms were promising, as they provided insights into how learning opportunities might be developed to facilitate teachers' professional training. Findings related to social interaction, although limited in number, revealed important features of human interaction, such as topic shifting, ending conversations, and the functions of religious markers. The paper concludes with a discussion of the challenges in implementing conversation analysis and calls for future research on this promising approach in the Arab world.

Keywords: Arab world, conversation analysis, English as a foreign language, social interaction, scoping review, methodology, professional training, religious markers, human interaction.

1. INTRODUCTION

Conversation Analysis (CA) is an analytical approach that enables researchers to identify and understand the structure of human interaction. In the past decades, conversation analysis has made a significant contribution to the field of applied linguistics [Richards & Seedhouse, 2005]. Published studies unveil the nature of human interaction in a wide range of nat-

ural settings, such as linguistic therapy, workplace, and classrooms. The principles of turn-taking, turn organization, sequencing, and word usage/selection, are extensively used in this approach [Schegloff et al., 2002]. The moment-by-moment analyses reveal how CA interacts with language-related fields, such as psychology, media, and education, and how language is being used by educators, professionals, and members of the general public [Kasper & Wagner, 2014]. Another important point of implementing CA is that it allows for interpreting some linguistic phenomena, such as translanguaging and gendered conversation. The details of natural interaction take into account the influence of context, culture, and other variables on human interaction. The field can be enriched if other analysis methods, such as quantitative methods, are implemented [Seedhouse, 2022]. The use of CA for understanding the two common strands of human interaction, namely socialization and language teaching and learning, has grown in popularity in the field of applied linguistics, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, and research has demonstrated encouraging outcomes [Richards & Seedhouse, 2005].

Compared to non-Arab contexts, the Arab world is still in the early stages of using CA in EFL classes and social interactions. The study evaluates these efforts and offers recommendations for future research. To the best of our knowledge, there are no scoping reviews or, indeed any other types of reviews of the use of CA in Arab environments or at the international level. Joshua's [2012] review of classroom discourse included some CA studies; however, none of the references included studies from the Arab context. It seems that Arab researchers started publishing their research articles on the implementation of CA after 2012. With the knowledge that there are some studies on the implementation of CA in the Arab world, this study explores the directions of CA implementation, evaluates the available studies, and suggests directions for future research. The study is driven by the following questions:

RQ1. What is the current state of CA research in the Arab educational and social contexts?

RQ2. What research methods have been incorporated into the CA method in the reviewed studies?

RQ3. What are the major findings of the reviewed CA studies?

RQ4. What are the challenges of implementing CA in the Arab world?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. History of CA

CA was founded by Harvey Sacks and his associates, Gail Jefferson, Emanuel Schegloff, and others. It developed from techniques of ethnomethodology, which studies common sense reasoning. Even though CA was created in the 1960s, Harold Garfinkel was credited with using it as a tool for social science study. Talk-in-interaction, on the other hand, was introduced by Sacks, which highlights the connections between actions, such as utterances and sequences in interaction [ten Have, 2007]. Actions obtain their meaning from their positions within the sequences in which they are located. CA first used a different approach to social science research than ethnographic approaches. Ethnography frequently makes unusual events relatable to the normative way of thinking, whereas CA challenges common-sense information to make it worth examining [Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998]. To obtain complete understanding of the local features of interaction, CA is characterized as a thorough method for studying real conversations. It intends to look into, among other things, how participants take turns and put together utterance sequences and how they spot and fix any issues that arise throughout the session [Hopper et al., 1986; Pomerantz & Fehr, 1997].

Although CA sees human behavior as ordered and structured, it extends to include the process of interaction. Verbal components of communication like turn-taking, subject management, repairs, and adjacency pairs, form the core focus of CA. It should be noted here that CA takes into account non-verbal communication like gestures and gazes. It has entered the field of foreign language interaction, which will be explained in the next subsection.

2.2. CA and foreign language interaction

CA has become a common methodology for analyzing interactions occurring within a wide range of languages, contexts, and age groups. It has been applied to interactions in both social and academic contexts. Richards and Seedhouse [2005] addressed the contribution of CA to the field of applied linguistics. CA unveils the nature of speech therapy, professional talks, native and non-native speakers' interaction, and classroom discourse. For the purpose of this review, the discussion will focus on EFL interactions in academic and non-academic settings.

The topic of interaction in EFL classrooms has received wide attention, and available studies have revealed a mutual relationship between pedagogy and interaction. For instance, to answer the question "How is L2 classroom interaction organized?" Seedhouse [2004] applied CA to a large and diverse database of language classes from around the world and identified the basic sequence of organization in EFL classroom contexts.

Markee [2005] highlighted the merits of examining off-task talk, which is close to natural communication, as it makes interactions meaningful for learners. In addition, it allows teachers to evaluate learners' actual levels of competency.

The use of video-recorded data is another aspect of CA research conducted in classroom settings. Multimodality, including hand movements, gazes, and facial expressions, assists and complements data analysis. For instance, Sert and Walsh [2013] examined students' non-verbal displays that indicated insufficient knowledge. Other studies have examined the use of gestures to maintain the flow of conversation and clarify miscommunication [e.g., Majlisi, 2018; van Compernolle & Smotrova, 2017].

Some studies have begun to look into how technology, including computers and interactive smart tables, is used in the classroom [e.g., Seedhouse & Almutairi, 2009; Seedhouse et al., 2020]. These studies, although few in number, can offer recommendations from a CA lens, regarding the ways in which technology can be utilized to improve students' interaction in the classroom and increase their linguistic skills.

Some studies have proposed frameworks for teacher development in EFL classrooms. For instance, Walsh [2006] developed the Self-Evaluation Tool for Teacher Talk (SETT) framework to assist teachers in improving their classroom interactions. Further examples of CA implementation in EFL classrooms can be located in the study by Jenks and Seedhouse [2015].

Regarding EFL social interaction, there is a plethora of studies that examine the nature of human communication in social contexts from a CA perspective, particularly in the field of English as a lingua franca (ELF). For instance, Pietikäinen [2014] examined how couples who speak different mother tongues use ELF in their daily communications. The analysis reveals that couples' code-switching to their mother tongue is a natural phenomenon. Many similar studies are found in the "*Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*" (JELF) and others dedicated to social interaction.

Most studies have acknowledged the role of the CA methodology in understanding human interaction. Many studies employ CA as the only analysis method; however, Seedhouse [2022] encourages combining CA with other methodologies for in-depth analysis and novel implications.

Having highlighted the merits of implementing the CA methodology for assessing pedagogical and social interactions at the international level, this review addresses the implementation of CA in the Arab world.

3. METHODOLOGY

A scoping review is useful for the rapid mapping of a study subject and for assessing the primary sources of evidence available [Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Levac et al., 2010]. This review may be used by researchers to synthesize findings, fill in any gaps, and improve future studies. Figure 1 presents the scoping process adopted by the current study, based on the five-stage methodological framework developed by Arksey and O'Malley [2005].
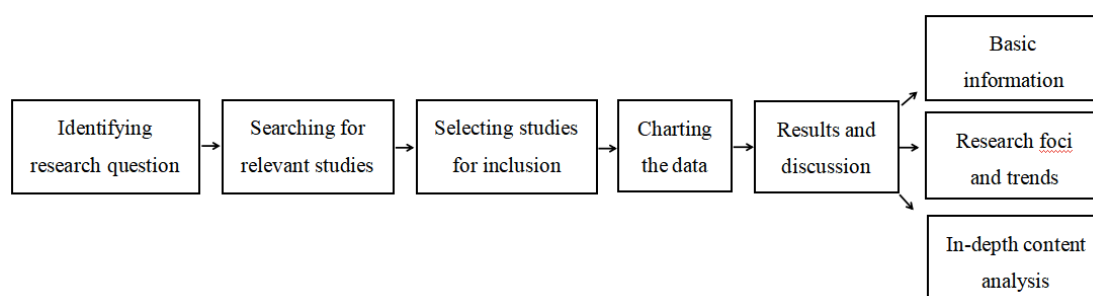

Figure 1: The stages of the scoping review, adapted from Arksey and O'Malley [2005]

3.1. Course of the scoping review

3.1.1. Identifying research questions

The researcher's familiarity with CA studies in Arab contexts has facilitated the classification of these studies into CA studies in classrooms and CA studies in social contexts. Following this classification, the researcher identified four areas of inquiry that were stated in the Introduction: research focus and recent developments in available studies in each classification, the types of methods incorporated into the CA method, and the challenges of conducting CA studies in the Arab world.

3.1.2. Searching for the relevant literature: Data collection

In order to ensure the feasibility of the primary material and to assess whether the published studies are of high quality, well-known and trusted indexing sources were searched: Web of Science collections, Scopus, ERIC, EBSCO, PROQUEST, DOAJ, and Google Scholar.

Key search terms were created and categorized based on two dimensions according to the purpose of the review: CA in teaching and learning contexts, and CA in social contexts, with a particular focus on EFL in Arabic contexts. The key search terms are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Keyword search

Key search terms					
And	Code-switching among Arab learners	Teaching English to Arab learners	Arab learners of English	EFL	ELT	EFL
	Conversation analysis	Conversation analysis	Conversation analysis	Conversation analysis	Conversation analysis	Social interaction

3.1.3. Selecting studies for inclusion

Only studies in the Arab context, where English is used as a foreign language, were included. Studies concerning Arab students abroad were excluded because of the impact of foreign contexts on teaching and socializing in EFL. Studies from unknown sources or journals (e.g. unknown publishers and the absence of ISSN) were excluded. As the focus of the review was on EFL interaction, the time span included articles published in all years in the English language. Table 2 provides an overview of these criteria.

Table 2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Databases	Web of Science collections, Scopus, ERIC, EBSCO, PROQUEST, DOAJ, Google Scholar	Predatory journals (e.g., lacking doi/ISSN identifiers, unknown publishers, and ambiguous review process).
Time span	Open	None
Language of publication	English	Other languages
Publication type	Online peer-reviewed articles	All other types of publications
Literature focus	Teaching EFL and socialization via EFL	Studies outside these scopes
Context	Arab countries	Studies concerned with Arabs living abroad
Types of institutional interaction	Academic (higher education and schools) and non-academic	None

3.1.4. Charting data

The fourth stage of a scoping review is charting the selected articles. A summary of each study was developed, taking into consideration the inclusion criteria, to validate the collected data. Table 3 summarizes the charting phase of the data.

Table 3. Charting phase of the data

Phases of identifying included studies	Number of records found in databases
Initial identification of CA studies	25,893
Number of records related to CA in academic contexts	18,861
Number of records related to CA in non-academic contexts	12,019
Number of records that match the study aims after reading the full text	12
Number of records that focus solely on CA methodology	10
Number of records that combine CA with other methodologies	2

4. RESULTS

This review identified 12 studies that were in line with its aims (see Appendix A: List of the included studies). Although the studies included in this review were limited in number, they provided rich information for linguists and researchers interested in the nature of EFL interactions in academic and social settings in Arab countries. The following subsections present the studies identified in each setting.

4.1. Review of studies on pedagogical interaction in academic contexts

Eight studies were identified in the area of pedagogical interaction. Six studies were carried out in Saudi Arabia, one in the UAE, and one in Kuwait. The number of studies in the Saudi Arabian context does not suggest that the CA methodology has received more attention from Saudi researchers, since the majority of published studies are authored by the same pool of researchers (Appendix A). While six studies were conducted in higher education settings, only two studies were conducted in schools.

The reviewed studies can be grouped according to their themes. First, there are studies that cover motivational practices that may contribute to professional development. Al-Nofaie [2017] and Jawhar [2018] exemplified humor as an effective motivational practice that engages learners in interaction and creates learning opportunities. Alkhazraji [2018] identified friendly interaction between teachers and students as a motivational practice that assists grammar learning. Jawhar et al. [2021] examined the role of some teaching strategies in extending classroom interaction, such as extended wait time, open-ended questions, and active listenership. H. Waer and H. Al-Nofaie [2019] identified the typology of reflective conversations in task-based interactions and its contribution to learning. These studies encouraged CA to examine the structuring and sequencing of turns.

The pragmatic dimensions of CA interactions have not received much attention. Clift and Helani [2010] identified the functions of the religious marker "inshallah" (meaning "God willing"). Jawhar [2016] explored the meaning construction of the marker "yes" in different contexts (e.g. agreement, continuer, and acknowledgement).

The methodology adopted by all the studies was limited to CA, with the exception of Jawhar [2016], who combined CA and corpus linguistics, and Al-Ghathami [2018], who included quantitative measures. All studies used audio recordings for data collection. None of the studies utilized

multimodal analysis, since the analysis was limited to verbal interaction. Technology-based interactions were not addressed in any study. All studies acknowledged the merits of implementing CA to understand learning processes in EFL classrooms. None of these commented on the challenges of using CA to study human interaction. Minor limitations were highlighted by Alkhazraji [2018] regarding the difficulty of generalizing the findings from one context or setting.

The reviewed studies have appeared in varied journals. Three studies were published in the *Arab World English Journal* (AWEJ), which was relevant to the Arab world, and the others were published in international journals.

4.2. Review of studies on EFL socialization in non-academic contexts

Similar to CA studies for pedagogical purposes, CA studies of social interaction in the Arab context were limited in number. A few studies were carried out in workplace environments. Qutub [2014] conducted a study of identity construction in a job interview at a major Saudi university. He found that a non-native speaker interviewee lacks the communicative skills needed to avoid misunderstanding, compared to a native speaker interviewee. A suggestion was made to introduce job training courses for non-native speakers as part of their undergraduate curriculum. Another study by Al-Amoudi [2013], which was conducted at a Saudi language institute, identified 18 strategies used by instructors to end their friendly face-to-face conversations, such as dismissing oneself by giving adequate reasons and showing no interest in continuing the conversation. Al-Ghathami [2018] examined the patterns of code-switching in the conversations of women in a café in Saudi Arabia, with a focus on pauses and intonations. This study contributed to the nature of female conversation in the Arab world. Another study by Cliff and Helani [2010] focused on the function of the religious marker "inshallah," which is used for ending a topic and starting a new one.

All the above-mentioned studies relied solely on the CA methodology, with the exception of Al-Ghathami [2018], who combined quantitative measures. Only Qutub [2014] mentioned the limitations of the CA methodology, which dealt with the inappropriate generalizability of the findings. Three studies were published in *AWEJ*, and one in *Language and Society.*

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Summary of evidence

This review examines an under-researched topic – the status of the CA approach in the Arab world for understanding human interaction in EFL. The studies available on implementing CA in the Arab context for EFL interaction can be classified into two main types: CA studies of pedagogical interaction in EFL classrooms, and CA studies of social interaction. The first is concerned with classroom interactions for pedagogical purposes. On the other hand, the second type is concerned with communication for socialization among interlocutors (i.e. non-pedagogical purposes).

The review of CA studies for pedagogical purposes reveals a scarcity of such studies in the Arab context, compared to other international contexts (e.g. European and South Asian contexts). The positive findings, revealed in CA studies in the Arab context, are promising and encouraging (e.g. [Alghasab, 2017]; [Jawhar, 2018]). Therefore, Arab researchers should be encouraged to discover the connection between CA and EFL learning. There are many CA features that are unexplored, such as turn management, repairs, overlapping, and silence, which keep CA studies in the Arab context in their infancy. In addition, the functions of pragmatic markers in an interaction need

to be highlighted from a CA perspective. Multimodal frameworks and technology-based interaction are absent. Teacher training programs that examine the role of conversation in the learning process should be addressed by adapting one of the effective frameworks, such as Walsh's [2006] Self-Evaluation of Teacher Talk (SETT) model for classroom interaction.

Similar to CA studies for pedagogical purposes, CA studies on social interaction in the Arab context are limited in number [Al-Amoudi, 2013; Al-Ghathami, 2018; Clift & Helani, 2010; Qutub, 2013]. Examining interactions in various workplaces should be encouraged to understand how people of different professions interact.

5.2. Challenges of implementing CA in the Arab world

Although the reviewed studies do not provide clear reasons for avoiding CA in examining discourse in the Arab context, this paper predicts a few, based on the author's experience with the topic. To identify interactional patterns and sequences, CA corpora need to be large in size, which requires researchers to record and transcribe interaction samples over long periods. Additionally, the analysis of CA data, application of CA conventions, and examination of verbal and non-verbal features of interaction are time-consuming. Video recording could be an issue in itself. Some institutions do not welcome video recording, as they feel it is intrusive, particularly if these institutions are not familiar with the purposes and nature of research projects. In Qutub's [2014] study, the camera was turned off during the job interview, which limited a richer analysis. Another challenge is the lack of research training courses on CA implementation. All of these challenges may demotivate Arab researchers from implementing the CA methodology in their studies.

Whatever the challenges, Arab researchers should pay attention to the fertile area of assessing language learning processes, EFL teaching practices, and social interaction via a CA lens. Researchers should remember the merits of combining CA with another methodology to achieve an in-depth understanding of the nature of human interaction [Seedhouse, 2022].

This review contributes to the field of CA approach in the Arab world. It reveals what Arab researchers have identified in this field and has implications for future research. As it is one of the few scoping reviews carried out in the field of applied linguistics in the Arab world [Al-Nafjan & Alhawsawi, 2022], Arab researchers are advised to carry out more scoping reviews for the advancement of linguistics in the Arab context.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This review explored the status of CA studies of human interaction via EFL in the Arab world. Despite its exploratory nature and the limited number of identified studies, this scoping review offered some insight into the key points of focus in CA studies conducted in the Arab context, highlighted interactional features, and identified future research directions. The major finding of this review is the classification of CA studies in the Arab world into two types: CA studies for pedagogical purposes and for socialization. The review demonstrated that while the CA approach is not a common research direction among Arab researchers, its implementation by Arab researchers has been gaining attention recently.

Author Contributions
This study was fully designed, conducted, and written by the author.

Conflict of Interest
The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Appendix:
Studies Included in the Scoping Review

	study	Year	Country	Methodology	Data collection tool	type of data	Journal
1	Jawhar	2018	Saudi Arabia	CA	audio recording	verbal	*AWEJ*
2	Jawhar	2016	Saudi Arabia	CA and CL	audio recording	verbal	*AWEJ*
3	Jawhar, S, Alhawsawi & Walsh	2021	Saudi Arabia	CA	audio recording	verbal	*AWEJ*
4	Jawhar & Alnofaie	2016	Saudi Arabia	CA	audio recording	verbal	*Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*
5	Alkhazraji	2018	UAE-Dubai	CA	audio recording	verbal	*Journal of Language Teaching and Research*
6	Al-Nofaie	2017	Saudi Arabia	CA	audio recording	verbal	*International Journal of Language Academy*
7	Alghasab	2017	Kuwait	CA	audio recording	verbal	*Cognet Education*
8	Waer & Al-Nofaie	2019	Saudi Arabia	CA	audio recording	verbal	*International Journal of English Language and Linguistics Research*
9	Al-Ghathami	2018	Saudi Arabia	CA and quantitative measures	audio recording	verbal	*AWEJ*
10	Qutub	2014	Saudi Arabia	CA	audio recording	verbal	*AWEJ*
11	Al-Amoudi	2013	Saudi Arabia	CA	audio recording	verbal	*AWEJ*
12	Clift and Helani	2010	SYRIA	CA	audio recording	verbal	*Language in Society*