

**« Space for learning : Applying corpus linguistics  
and conversation analysis in the investigation  
of small group teaching in higher education »**

**Prof. Steve Walsh**

School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences, Newcastle University

In this paper, I consider how a combined corpus linguistics and conversation analysis methodology can reveal new insights into the relationship between interaction patterns, language use and types of knowledge. The focus of the study is higher education small group teaching sessions and data are drawn from a one million word corpus, NUCASE (Newcastle Corpus of Academic Spoken English). Data are analysed using a combination of corpus linguistics (CL) and an applied conversation analysis (CA) approach (henceforth CLCA).

Using this methodology, in which quantitative findings are elaborated by more close-up qualitative analyses of sequences of interaction, it is possible to discover patterns and relationships between knowledge types and language use which each methodology on its own would be unable to uncover. A CLCA approach enables us to consider more closely the relationships between, for example, interaction patterns and lexical chunks and to evaluate the extent to which 'space for learning' might be opened up or closed down.

In the data, I will identify and describe four distinct 'micro-contexts', each with its own distinct combination of language use, interaction patterns and pedagogic goals. I suggest that awareness among university teachers of these relationships would help facilitate the creation of more adequate interactional 'spaces for learning' in small group teaching in higher education.

Finally, I offer an evaluation of a combined CL and CA methodology and consider its application to other research settings.