Language Learning & Technology
ISSN 1094-3501
2025, Volume 29, Issue 1
pp. 1–5

BOOK REVIEW

Review of *Instruction Giving in Online Language Lessons: A Multimodal (Inter)action Analysis*

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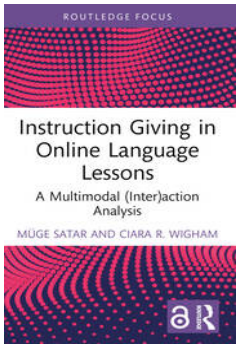
Instruction Giving in Online Language Lessons:
A Multimodal (Inter)action Analysis
Satar, M., & Wigham, C. R.
2023
ISBN: 9781032227955
US $26.99
194 pp.
Routledge
New York, London



The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated technological advancements as well as a global shift to remote learning, thereby transforming online education for both teachers and students (Abdel Latif, 2022; Shin, 2020). This transition reshaped instructional dynamics and exposed challenges (e.g., disparities in digital tools and literacy, issues with classroom management), particularly for educators adapting from in-person to virtual classrooms. As online learning environments became the norm, new strategies and frameworks became essential to navigating the complexities of virtual teaching. In the monograph, *Instruction Giving in Online Language Lessons: A Multimodal (Inter)action Analysis*, Satar and Wigham (2023) build on their prior research (2020, 2021) and use a multimodal interaction analysis (MIA) approach (Norris, 2024) to examine how experienced language teachers conduct online lessons. Their study focuses on task repetition, learner group size, and three distinct task types. Their findings highlight the multimodal nature of online language instruction and the unique competencies required of educators, many not directly transferable from traditional to virtual classrooms. The book offers detailed micro-level analyses of instruction-giving practices in virtual settings, contributing valuable insights for applied linguists and language education scholars. It can also be used as a reflective resource by online language teachers who wish to become more aware of their verbal, non-verbal, and multimodal practices.

In Chapter 1, Satar and Wigham lay the groundwork for addressing challenges in transferring teaching skills from in-person to online classrooms. Certain key concepts are defined, such as “semiotic lag,” communication delays disrupting classroom dynamics, and “semiotic (mis)alignment,” the disparities in tools and resources hindering communication and understanding (p. 2). The authors emphasize the importance of multimodal communication (e.g., using gestures, gaze, text chat, and spoken language), and they outline four essential teaching competencies: (a) socio-affective, (b) pedagogical, (c) semiotic, and (d) technological. In addition, Satar and Wigham identify two critical research gaps: methodological gaps and contextual gaps. The first calls for improved tools to analyze teachers’ online forms of communication, while the second highlights the limited research on how experienced language teachers adapt their methods to different tasks and students. The authors address these gaps by using the innovative MIA approach to investigate experienced teachers’ online instruction-giving practices with individuals and groups of students, as well as through specific task types.

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In Chapter 2, Satar and Wigham describe the participants, data collection methods, and analytical approaches guiding their mixed-methods research design. The participants included three experienced online English teachers—British English speakers with a minimum of two years of teaching experience—and nine volunteer language learners from a higher education institution in Turkey. Lessons were conducted on Skype using a task-based language teaching approach. The approach consisted of (a) an introductory lesson, (b) a convergent task involving a collaborative email-writing activity, and (c) a divergent task centered on discussions about vegetarianism. The nine volunteer learners and three English teachers participated in all three tasks. Data collection methods included Snagit screen recordings of each lesson and post-sequence interviews to explore teacher and learner perceptions of task instructions. For the analysis, the researchers examined a semi-controlled corpus of screen recordings and interview data using Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and the MIA approach. This method allowed them to categorize communication into higher-level actions (HLAs)—structured sequences of lower-level actions with clear openings and closings (e.g., engaging in conversation)—and lower-level actions (LLAs) containing discrete meaning units (e.g., speech, gaze, gestures, posture, and proxemics). By examining how HLAs emerged from LLAs, the authors uncovered the ways in which the teachers coordinated multimodal resources to deliver instructions effectively. The use of MIA as the central methodological framework allowed for a nuanced investigation of how teachers adapted their instructional techniques in online spaces for different groups of students, class sizes, and task types. In doing so, the study offers deeper insights into the complexities of virtual language teaching.

In Chapter 3, Satar and Wigham address the first of three research questions, which explores how a teacher's instructions change when delivering the same lesson to different pairs of students. The participants included one teacher and two pairs of students, with the teacher engaging each pair in separate iterations of the lesson. According to the authors, the findings reveal that the teachers' LLAs remained largely consistent across the two iterations of the task, but the number of HLAs decreased in the second iteration as the teachers provided more context for the task before sharing resources. The researchers surmise that this change reflects a desire for greater efficiency, as the teachers delivered shorter, more focused instructions in the second iteration. By contextualizing the task before introducing materials, the teacher delivered more concise instructions, which led to adjustments in the HLA sequence. The analysis also highlights the teacher's use of deictic gestures (e.g., pointing to direct students' attention), iconic gestures (e.g., visually representing concrete actions), and metaphoric gestures (e.g., illustrating abstract concepts) to enhance comprehension. Additionally, the authors found that the teacher's awareness of misalignments in semiotic resources—gestures or gazes—and modal density (e.g., the complexity of communicative modes) influenced how they changed their instructions. These results suggest that although core communicative strategies remain the same, repeated instruction allows teachers to streamline their approaches.

In Chapter 4, Satar and Wigham address their second research question, focusing on how a teacher's instructions differ when they repeat the same lesson with only one learner versus a pair. The analysis compares how learner group size impacts teachers' instructional strategies. While LLAs remained consistent in both groups, differences in HLAs emerged in the second iteration, primarily due to misalignments in semiotic and modal density. Specifically, semiotic misalignment occurred when the teacher failed to confirm the individual student's access to the resource, leading to confusion. Modal density misalignment arose when the teacher focused on sending the resource while the student's attention was on responding to the teacher's question about gift traditions. The teacher addressed these challenges by confirming access to the resource and redirecting the student's focus. The authors emphasize the importance of explicitly coordinating attention, confirming understanding, and articulating off-screen actions, particularly in online environments with fewer learners.

In Chapter 5, Satar and Wigham address their third research question by analyzing how teachers' instructional approaches vary when giving instructions for different task types. The analysis compares three teachers' instructional strategies during a convergent task—where students collaboratively chose gift packages and drafted emails for monetary contributions from colleagues—and a divergent task—

where students discussed vegetarianism and created visual summaries of their discussion using a virtual whiteboard. The authors used multimodal interaction analysis (MIA) to analyze the screen recordings of the teachers' instruction-giving in these two tasks by categorizing communication into higher-level actions (HLAs) and lower-level actions (LLAs). They found that the convergent task required more HLAs with higher multimodal density due to frequent shifts between different modes of communication. In contrast, the divergent task was more conversational, requiring fewer detailed instructions and allowing for greater teacher flexibility to adapt the task to students' needs. Teachers also used an interactive whiteboard in the divergent task to manage resources, introducing new HLAs for resource editing and facilitation. While some HLAs, including managing resources, focusing on task accomplishment, and launching the task were shared across both tasks, the convergent task demanded more structured, complex instructional actions (e.g., providing key task information, defining roles, stating outcomes, and allocating time). The analysis suggests that task type influences instructional strategies, with convergent tasks requiring more structured guidance and divergent tasks benefiting from more flexible, conversational approaches. These findings emphasize the role of task type in shaping how teachers use multimodal communication to convey instructions in online language teaching.

In Chapter 6, Satar and Wigham summarize the methodology, the findings, the pedagogical implications of their work, and some potential directions for future research. Specifically, the authors reinforce the importance of their methodological framework—particularly the application of MIA—in capturing the complexities of online language instruction. In addition, Satar and Wigham reaffirm their findings, highlighting the complex task of managing multimodal resources in online teaching environments. They also discuss pedagogical competencies that may help language teachers give better instructions in these environments. The authors acknowledge their research offers a micro-level analysis of teaching practices in synchronous online language environments, and they exercise caution in offering suggestions for teachers. Thus, rather than position their findings as definitive best practices, the authors frame their suggestions as a "set of reflections" (p. 153). The authors also indicate that the complexities of online teaching, such as managing multimodal resources and ensuring clear communication, require ongoing reflection and adaptation. In considering future projects, they advocate for expanding the scope of their research to include more task types, proficiency levels, and data collection methods.

The book's overall strengths and contributions to the field lie in the groundbreaking nature of the study and the rich detail describing online instruction-giving, both of which provide multiple launch points for future study. The examination of barriers unique to online instruction-giving, such as semiotic lag and semiotic misalignment, and the discussion of nearly every measurable action of the teachers offer a first-of-its-kind window into online instruction-giving. The study includes extensive screenshots and narrative descriptions of teacher gazes, oral and visual descriptions of materials, frame placements on students' screens, gestures, facial expressions, etc. Additionally, although the authors explicitly focus their observations on the language teachers, the interviews with students discussing the effectiveness of the teachers' interactions are particularly illuminating. Other researchers may want to build upon this foundation by focusing on both teachers and students, as online learning is inherently interactive. Finally, the pedagogical "reflections" are helpful for researchers and language teachers alike. Satar and Wigham identify practical planning tips for giving online language lessons, the efficacy of which can be investigated by researchers interested in the impact of their implementation in various contexts.

One weakness of the book is the relatively small and homogenous sample size. The three students shared the same cultural background and had similar (high) levels of English proficiency, while the three teachers were native English speakers from the UK. Although the authors acknowledge the limitations of their sample size, they occasionally slip into generalizations that the study may not support. For example, when discussing variations in instruction-giving, the authors assume that the teacher's failure to confirm student access to the online resources in the first iteration was due to the number of students (p. 98), ignoring other potential factors, such as their teaching background, technological proficiency, and possible fatigue. Similarly, the authors overlook other factors that may account for differences in instruction-giving, including intercultural dynamics. For example, the cultural schemata of the Turkish

students may have played a role in teacher differences in instruction-giving for certain tasks, particularly the collaborative task involving the preparation of a gift package for a colleague changing jobs. As one student explained, such gifts for departing colleagues are uncommon in their culture. Thus, differences in instruction-giving for this task may have stemmed from the need to provide contextual explanations. Other factors not discussed in the book that may have shaped the teachers' instruction-giving include students' digital literacy levels and the rapport between teachers and students.

Even though the authors' discussions of barriers to instruction-giving in online education are relevant to teachers, the dense, technical writing style and extensive use of field-specific jargon make the text less accessible to language teachers. This mismatch is a pity, given the usefulness of the authors' "reflections" on online language teaching competencies, which could be used by teachers as checklists during lesson planning. Thus, other researchers or academics focused on the pedagogical side of online language teaching may want to build on these reflections in a more reader-friendly way.

Overall, the rich level of detail and innovative nature of the study make this book a treasure trove for individuals looking to investigate pedagogical competencies specific to online language teaching. Thus, it makes perfect sense that at the end of the book, the authors express that their goal was to inspire further research in applied linguistics. They accomplished this goal since the book offers a meticulous framework and numerous starting points for exploring the nuances of online language instruction.

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