

ABSTRACT**Oral Interaction in the Teaching and Learning of Spanish in Grades
Seven and Nine of Three Selected Jamaican Secondary Schools****Reslyn June Simmonds**

This study examined the phenomenon of oral interaction in the foreign language classroom. Using audio and video-recorded observations of lessons in progress, as well as interviews with the teachers and students from Spanish classes in three Jamaican secondary schools, this multisite multicase qualitative case study utilized Ethnography along with Conversation Analysis to uncover the patterns of interaction between the teachers and the students and among the students. The study also explored the opportunities in the classrooms for students to express personal meaning and consequently their development of oral competence in the target language.

The findings reveal that (i) the dominant interaction type was the one in which the teacher interacts with all the students – teacher-student interaction, and therefore, does not facilitate the conditions favourable for the students to interact among themselves – students-student interaction. (ii) the teacher’s talk, which was characterised by sequences of the three-part Initiation-Response-Follow up (IRF) exchange or variations of it, occupied most of the interaction, and the students

were mainly responders. (iii) The concern for impartation of knowledge of the rules of grammar superseded the concern for target-language competence.

The significance of this study lies in the fact that it focused, not only on the teacher's speech, but also on that of the students, especially as it concerns interaction among themselves.

Keywords: Reslyn June Simmonds, oral interaction, teacher-student interaction, student-student interaction, foreign language, classrooms, secondary schools, Conversation Analysis.