

Developing Learners' Interactional Competence through Communication and Discussion Strategies (Part 2)

Learning from NUFS

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Introduction

Ellis (2005) affirms that “[i]n the case of task-based research, there is a clear need for a shift from laboratory-like studies to the careful evaluation of both its implementation and the learning outcomes in real classrooms” (p. 725). This study documents how Japanese university students develop their interactional competence through collaborative dialogue in content-based English classes based on TBLT.

Theoretical Background

1. Cognitive view on SLA

SLA is a cognitive and individual phenomenon
According to Long (1985, 1996)
comprehensible input gained through
interactional adjustments such as negotiating
meaning and modifying output is central to
second language acquisition” (Foster & Ohta,
2005, p. 402).

Theoretical Background

2. Sociocultural view on SLA

Learning a language is a social phenomenon (Lantolf, 2000; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Ohta, 2000, 2001; Swain, 2000, Swain & Deters, 2007; Vygotsky, 1978; Wells, 1999; Wenger, 1998).

“[L]anguage acquisition is realized through a collaborative process whereby learners appropriate the language of the interaction as their own, for their own purposes, building grammatical, expressive, and cultural competence through this process” (Ohta, 2000, p. 51).

Theoretical Background

Interactional competence

Young (2011) distinguishes communicative competence and interactional competence by saying that communicative competence is concerned with individual knowledge, while interactional competence is “not what a person *knows*, it is what a person *does* together with others” (p. 430, italics original).

Theoretical Background

Interactional competence (definition)

Young (2011) defines interactional competence as “participants’ knowledge of the interactional architecture of a specific discursive practice, including knowledge of how to employ linguistic, pragmatic, and interactional resources in the construction of a discursive practice” (p. 434; see also Cekaite, 2007).

Theoretical Background

3. Interactional competence (definition)

Linguistic resources include pronunciation, lexis and syntactic structures, pragmatic resources include topic introduction and maintenance, and interactional resources include speech acts, turn-taking, repair and boundaries (Cekaite, 2007; Hall, 1999; Young, 2008, 2011; Young & Miller, 2004).

Theoretical Background

3. Previous study 1

Ohta (1999) investigated how interactional routines impacted first-year university learners of Japanese in the socialization of L2 interactional competence. In particular, Ohta kept track of one female student (Candace) over one academic year. Ohta found that “[t]hrough repeated participation in the routines of the classroom, Candace’s ability to utilize follow-up turn expressions grows over the academic year” (p. 1509).

Theoretical Background

3. Previous study 2

Cekaite (2007) explored a seven-year-old immigrant child's interactional competence in a Swedish immersion language classroom over one year.

Cekaite found three developmental stages (1- a silent child, 2 - a noisy and loud child, 3 - a skillful student) as her participation style in classroom activities changed and she became a competent member of the community.

Research Issues

Although previous studies on L2 interactional competence (IC) attempted to show how learners develop their interactional competence, except for Cekaite (2007) “little is known about the process by which learners develop their L2 IC, nor about the stages this development goes through” (Hall, et al., 2011, p. 7; see also Young, 2011, p. 436).

Furthermore, previous studies relied only on conversational analysis without using other qualitative data such as interviews.

Research Questions

1. How did students perceive and engage in various tasks through an integrated content-based curriculum?
2. What stages did students go through as they moved from peripheral to full participants?
3. How did students develop their interactional competence?

Participants and Teaching Context

- 21 first-year university students (8 males and 13 females) in Department of English Language Teaching (DELTA), Nagoya University of Foreign Studies
- DELTA was established in 2008 with an integrated English curriculum based on TBLT, which is called CBEC.
- There were 7 English classes. Among them, 4 classes (D&D, IR, AW, PUT) were integrated according to the same topic.
- Each topic was covered over 2 weeks.
- The participants' average score of TOEFL was 420

Data Collection: Mixed Methods

1. Videotaped conversations (12 topics):
 - (1) No. 1, 6, and 12 were evaluated by 3 NESTs based on a rubric (quantitative).
 - (2) No. 1, 6, and 12 were analyzed looking for negotiation for meaning and peer assistance (quantitative).
 - (3) No. 1, 6, and 12 were analyzed by using conversational analysis (qualitative).
2. Essays (12 topics): No. 1, 6, and 12 were evaluated by 3 NESTs based on a rubric (quantitative).
3. Self-evaluation reports (twice, at the end of each semester) (qualitative)
4. Interviews with 6 selected students (January by Sato in Japanese) (Qualitative)

Content Based English Curriculum (CBEC)

1 st Year	Discussion & Debate	(Friday)
	Intensive Reading	(Monday)
	Academic Writing	(Tuesday)
	Power-up Tutorial	(Thursday)

6 selected students

Student	Aki	Koji	Midori	Keiko	Hiroki	Toru
Sex	F	M	F	F	M	M
Level	Low-IM	IM	High-IM	High-IM	IM	Low-IM

Collaboration in student talk

Negotiation for meaning (Long 1996)

SLA studies have looked at NfM to see if interactional adjustments occur during communication breakdown.

Comprehension

Clarification

Confirmation

Collaboration in student talk

Negotiation for meaning

Comprehension – *“Do you understand?”*

Confirmation – *repetition followed by Y/N, rising intonation*

Clarification - *diff. b/n confirmation is that there is no presupposition of understanding*

Collaboration in student talk

Drawbacks of NfM analysis (Foster and Ohta, 2005)

1. *“tedious and face threatening”*
2. *“typically lexical in nature; not morphosyntactic”*
3. *“surface structures are ambiguous”*
4. *Task value evaluation may not be accurate for assessing language learning.*

Collaboration in student talk

Scaffolding/Assistance (Foster and Ohta 2005)

“... feature of learner talk that is claimed to promote L2 development.”

“... learners collaborate to create discourse in the target language...”

Collaboration in student talk

Scaffolding/Assistance (Foster and Ohta 2005)

1. *Co-construction*
2. *Other/self correction*
3. *Continuers*

Collaboration in student talk

Scaffolding/Assistance (Foster and Ohta 2005)

1. Co-construction – joint creation of an utterance; allows individuals to participate in dialog by building language skills.

Collaboration in student talk

Co-construction example

Koji: Yeah, pet is very nice point, but we have to =

Hiroshi: =More pay attention?

Koji: More pay attention, and don't too much take care of them.

(Hiroshi and Koji discussing Topic 6 - Pets)

Collaboration in student talk

Scaffolding/Assistance (Foster and Ohta 2005)

2. Other/self correction – Peer or self correction;
OIOR, SISR

Collaboration in student talk

Other/self correction example

Aki: *Why do you (.) so (.) why are you so tired?*

(Aki and Sayo discussing Topic 6 - Pets, underline to indicate her self-correction)

Collaboration in student talk

Scaffolding/Assistance (Foster and Ohta 2005)

3. **Continuers** – function to express interest, to prompt the speaker to continue and to elaborate

Collaboration in student talk

Continuers example

Aki: So (.) Keeping pets is good(.)
 for you, do you think?

Saya: Yes=

Aki: =For example? Why do you
 think so?

(Aki and Saya discussing Topic 6 - Pets)

Quantitative Results (Aki)

	T1	T6	T12
<i>Comprehension</i>	0	0	1
<i>Confirmation</i>	0	0	0
<i>Clarification</i>	0	1	1
Negotiation for Meaning	0	1	2

Quantitative Results (Aki)

	T1	T6	T12	Total
<i>Co-construction</i>	0	0	3	3
<i>Continuers/ Prompting</i>	7	30	22	59
<i>Self correction</i>	0	3	3	6
Assistance/Scaffolding	7	33	28	68

Three Development Stages

1. Stage 1: “Peripheral participation”
2. Stage 2: “Developing participation”
3. Stage 3: “Active participation”

Qualitative Results: CA

1. The first stage: “Peripheral participation”

7. Aki: = *because English has become an important thing recently. Today, there are (.) many things which are from (.) foreign countries. (.) We should know about foreign countries more than in the past.(.) The better we study foreign language =*

((The teacher snatches away the student’s essays, and with an awkward smile, Aki continues))

7. Aki: = *the more (.) friend, he he (1) friendly, friendly, friendly (.)= ((She starts to struggle))*

8. Toru: *[Yes]*

9. Aki: = *(3) How about you?*

1. The first stage: “Peripheral participation”

((Several turns later, after Toru has read part of his essay, the conversation changes because they are trying not to read their essays.))

15. Toru: *Um (.) Seconds (.) Ah (.) Some children think studying English is very hard. =*

16. Aki: *[Un-huh]*

17. Toru: *= And (.) dislike English. So: (.) elementary teacher? (.) can teach English=*

18. Aki: *[Un-huh]*

19. Toru: *=Not only for study.=((Toru has started reading his essay again))*

20. Aki: *[Yeah]*

21. Toru: *=But also enjoyment. (1) >Children should know English is good points< (2) And (1)>studying English< in (.) elementary school's purpose (.) is not study (.) just enjoyments.*

22. Aki: *[Un.]*

2. The second stage: “Developing participation”

1. Aki: *Ok. Do you like pets?*
 2. Sayo: *Yes, of course.*
 3. Aki: *So: (1) Um: (1) Keeping pets is good for you.(.) Do you think?*
- ((They are both making eye contact))*
4. Sayo: *Yes: (.) =*
 5. Aki: *=For example? <Why do you think so?>*
 6. Sayo: *I have two dogs (1) and >when I come back to home?
< (1),um (.) <these dogs: come around me:>=*
 7. Aki: *= Ah, yeah.=*
 8. Sayo: *=so I relieved=*
 9. Aki: *=Yeah, you feel relieve.*

2. The second stage: “Developing participation”

10. Sayo: Yes: (.) Many (.) many people feel relieved:(.)to
(.)to keep dogs? (.) or other pets?

11. Aki: Yeah.

12. Sayo: And (.) And (.) Um, when I investigated in
Internet=

13. Aki: Yeah.

14. Sayo: =Many (.) many (.) animal therapy?

15. Aki: Yeah, I know.

16. Sayo: Use (.) Is used (.) many places:

17. Aki: Yeah.

18. Sayo: Heart disease (1) pat (.) patient:=

19. Aki: =Yeah.

3. The third stage: “Active participation”

1. AKI: Uh-huh. Yeah. I think so, too. Ah (2) economy problem is not easy=
2. SAYA: =Yeah, that is so serious=
3. AKI: =Yeah. I think so, too. And, I think there are another (.) another problem about six year teacher training.
4. SAYA: Oh, tell me more.
5. AKI: Mm (.) I think there are a lot of problem in school. For example, bullying and monster Parents=
6. SAYA: =Un-huh.
7. AKI: =These problems are are not solved by teacher’s knowledge=
8. SAYA: =Ah.
9. AKI: =I think. So (.) studying for a long time can’t solve these problem (.)I think.

3. The third stage: “Active participation”

1. SAYA: Yes, I think so too. I think teachers teacher need have not only skills=
2. AKI: =Uh-huh.
3. SAYA =but also humanistic=
4. AKI: =Yeah! I think so, too=
5. SAYA: =That is not learned in only university=
6. AKI: =Yeah. Experience is also important I think.
7. SAYA: =Yes!
8. AKI: Thank you. Do you agree with me?
9. SAYA: Of course.
10. AKI: Thank you. Ah(.) I think six year teacher training
(.) If (.) if this system has had (.) ah (.) not only
studying study? Studying (.) ah (.) how do you say (.) ah
(.) not only knowledge but also (.) as you said (.)=
11. SAYA =humanistic.

Qualitative Results: Interview

1. The integrated curriculum was fun (all six students).

- It was fun. I could listen to different ideas from my classmates. I could change and deepen my ideas through four integrated classes. (Keiko)
- I could share and compare my ideas with my classmates'. Then, I could come up with my new ideas. That's why I enjoyed the program and I think it was useful. (Midori)

Results (Interview)

2. The curriculum was different from HS English classes (all six students).

- There was no pair work in my HS. The teacher mainly talked and checked the answers of the books for university entrance exams. However, it was boring and many students did not listen to the teacher and just did what they wanted to do. (Koji)
- We have to express our opinions in CBEC; however, we just memorized in HS. (Keiko)

Results (Interview)

3. Advantages of CBEC (All six students)

(1) Developing ideas by sharing ideas with classmates (six students)

- I could develop my ideas through the program. For example, I could learn different ideas from IR and changed my ideas. I sometimes changed my ideas in PUT through listening to others' ideas. I could choose better ideas by myself. As for "working women," I had an initial idea that women should continue to work to save money by putting their children to day-care centers. However, someone told me that putting a child to a day-care center costs money. Then, I changed to the idea that women should stay home for one year to raise their babies. (Aki)

Results (Interview)

- We started with D&D on Friday. Then, I thought the topic was difficult and I didn't like it. Next we came to understand the topic better in IR on Monday. After that, I could rewrite my opinion better by finding more information in AW on Tuesday. Then, I came to like the topic. Finally, in PUT on Thursday I had chances to listen to others' ideas and were often impressed by others'. I thought they were clear and found the topic more interesting. (Koji)
- I could listen to many ideas from different classmates and expressed my ideas in all four classes. Because there were four classes, I could deepen my understanding about each topic. (Keiko)

Results (Interview)

(2) Using more conversation strategies (three students)

- I was not good at asking follow-up questions so there were many silences at the beginning. It was a torture. Then, I learned what kinds of questions I should ask through the program and got used to asking follow-up questions. (Koji)
- I could keep talking by using conversation strategies such as shadowing and follow-up questions compared to April. (Hiroki)

Results (Interview)

(3) Learning vocabulary (two students)

- I also learned new vocabulary from news articles in IR. Those new words were useful in writing and speaking. (Keiko)
- I came to use new words by encountering them many times. (Koji)

Results (Interview)

(4) Recording/Self-evaluation was effective (five students)

- I could evaluate my ability objectively by watching the video. So it was useful. Also I was glad to see my progress. Through self-evaluation, I could notice my errors and my bad habits. (Hiroki)
- I hated recording and felt like crying at first because I got stuck and there were many silences. I could not express my ideas and just nodded to my partners. So I didn't like watching myself in the video. However, I think it was useful because I could set up my next goals. So I think it was useful. (Keiko)

Results (Interview)

4. Difficulties of topics (four students)

- International marriage and same-sex marriage were difficult because I had never thought about them. I could not find any good reasons and ended up with unclear ideas. (Keiko)
- I enjoyed talking about women's place and capital punishment. As for capital punishment, I thought it was the most difficult one. However, I heard many different ideas from my classmates and became interested in it. On the other hand, I had difficulty talking about same-sex marriage because most of the classmates had the same ideas. (Koji)

Results (Interview)

5. Progress (Six students)

- I could improve my English ability. There were many chances to use English in this program. I noticed my progress when I was spoken to by some foreign exchange students. I could communicate with them. (Toru)
- I could improve my TOEFL score by 80 points. I could communicate with my host family when I visited Boston in summer. (Koji)

Speaking Evaluation Results (Aki)

Video Total Score	T1	T6	T12
Average (20)	10.3	14.9	18.2
Aki	7.6	14	19

Writing Evaluation Results (Aki)

Essay Total	T1	T12
Average (25)	17.4	22.5
Aki	13.7	22.6

Speaking Improvement Summary

Total Video Average	Video 1	Video 6	Video 12
Low	7.66	13.66	16.33
High	14.33	18.66	19.66
Median	9.165	14	18.33
Average	10.275	14.997	18.264

Writing Improvement Summary

Total Essay Average	Essay 1	Essay 6	Essay 12
Low	12.66	15	17.33
High	21.33	23.33	24.66
Median	17.665	21.33	23.16
Average	17.38	20.38	22.49

Summary of Findings

1. How did the students perceive and engage in various tasks through the integrated content-based curriculum?
 - (1) Students enjoyed sharing their ideas with classmates and developed their ideas through the integrated curriculum.
 - (2) Communication strategies helped them to keep talking for a longer time.
 - (3) Students enjoyed topics which were divided into pros and cons.

Findings

- (4) Students learned new vocabulary words by recycling them through the integrated curriculum.
- (5) Recording/self-evaluation was useful to notice their strengths and weaknesses in their speaking performances.

Findings

2. What stages did students go through as they moved from peripheral to full participants?

(1) Students went through three stages in developing their interactional competence. They are “peripheral participation” “developing participation” and “active participation.”

(2) Students did not develop their interactional competence in a linear way. From this point of view, interactional competence is dynamic.

Findings

3. How did they develop their interactional competence?

(1) This study shows that engaging in collaborative dialogues through different topics developed students' interactional competence, without actually increasing the number of negotiation for meaning, as understood from the more traditional SLA approach.

Our study attests to what Foster & Ohta (2005) claimed— “[i]nteractional processes including negotiation for meaning and various kinds of peer assistance and repair are among the many ways learners gain access to the language being learned” (p. 426).

Findings

3. How did they develop their interactional competence?

(2) As students came to utilize interactional resources (such as communication strategies) available for their interaction, they performed better in recursive tasks.

van Compernelle (2015) explains that “interactional competencies develop because relevant resources are made available for use in interaction, where they may be picked up and recycled as part of the appropriation, or internalization, process” (p. 175).

Findings

3. How did they develop their interactional competence?

(3) Evaluation of their speaking and writing performances revealed that the gap between high achievers and low achievers had become narrower through the twelve topics over the academic year, which indicates that students moved from peripheral participants to full participants.

From this point of view, “interactional competencies and L2 development are united as mediated action” (van Compernelle, 2015, p. 184).

Future Direction

“A challenge to the field is whether the issues raised by the broadening of our understanding of the L2 acquisition process through such sociocultural perspectives will find their way into current models of communicative performance (e.g. Backman, 1990; Canale & Swain, 1980) that affect L2 learning through pedagogy, teacher education, and assessment of proficiency. Thus, much work lies ahead as we seek ways to incorporate our broadened understanding of L2 acquisition to benefit and empower learners” (Swain & Deters, 2007, p. 831).

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