

Language Features of Teachers and Learners in the ESL Classroom

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Considering the language of the teacher and learners constitute the two main types of target language that learners are exposed to in the second language classroom, the nature of the two and how each may serve as input deserve careful examination. The present study explored the features of the teachers' language and learners' language when engaged in discussion tasks of the same topic in adult ESL classrooms. A detailed descriptive analysis of each in discussion tasks revealed that the teachers' language facilitated learners' target language use by organizing the flow of the discussion and maintaining focus on the tasks, repeated learner utterances for reformulation and supply of appropriate input, focused on use of learning objectives in accurate and varied forms, and provided necessary lexical items and corrective feedback. The learners' language also displayed use of the learning objectives, yet lacked use in varied forms. Additionally, presumably due to limited language competence, the learners' language could not address errors or supply proper feedback. Based on the findings, a discussion of pertinent issues, implications, and recommendations for future research are presented.

I. INTRODUCTION

Research in second language acquisition (SLA) has presented significant discussions on the role of input in learning a second language (Gass, 1997; Gass & Varonis, 1994; Krashen, 1985; Long, 1985; Pica, Lincoln-Porter, Paninos, & Linnell, 1996). Claims have been made that input should be at a level slightly above a learner's competence if it is to be comprehensible as target language resource for acquisition (Krashen, 1985), and that learners can be afforded comprehensible input through negotiated interactions (Long, 1996). The general consensus in research seems to suggest exposure to appropriate input as an important condition for second language development.

In the second language classroom, there are various sources from which learners can receive target language input: the teacher, other learners, textbooks, and various learning materials. Yet, the target language that learners are exposed to in the classroom is predominantly the language of the teacher and of other learners. Teachers' language has been described as being accurate in grammar serving as a model of the target language (Pica & Doughty, 1985) while being limited in variety of the target language system (Guthrie, 1987). On the other hand, studies on learner group work have found that learner language was restricted in grammatical and target-like forms (Pica & Doughty, 1985; Shi, 1998) but elicited more opportunities for learners to practice using the target language (Long & Porter, 1985; Pica & Doughty, 1985).

Although a good account of the two main types of target language found in the language classroom, such inconclusive findings seem to fall short in providing a detailed description of the two types of target language input and how each may relate to classroom second language learning. This shortcoming can be attributed to the fact that examination of language in the classroom has often centered on features of the teachers' language (Chaudron, 1982; Guthrie, 1987; Henzl, 1979; Tsui Bik-May, 1985; Wong-Fillmore, 1985) or has mostly concentrated on interactional aspects for negotiating meaning in instances of communication problems between the teacher and learners or among learners (Doughty & Pica, 1986; Pica & Doughty, 1985; Rulon & McCreary, 1986; Shi, 1998). Moreover, studies of teacher language and/or learner language in the classroom have largely adopted quantified approaches (Doughty & Pica, 1986; Guthrie, 1987; Henzl, 1979; Pica & Doughty, 1985; Rulon & McCreary, 1986; Shi, 1998; Tsu Bik-May, 1985) leaving room for a more descriptive understanding.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to explore the nature of the two major types of target language available to learners in the second language classroom. Specifically, the study presents a detailed descriptive analysis of the teachers' language and learners' language with regard to specified language learning objectives in discussion tasks of the same topic. By analyzing each type of language under such conditions, a close observation of comparable features along with how each type of language may play into the second language learning process is pursued.

II. BACKGROUND

Since Krashen (1985) introduced the notion of comprehensible input, considerable research in SLA has embarked on investigating target language input that is comprehensible for language learning. One area where such investigation has proliferated is in the language classroom. The second language classroom displays an interrelation of

complex factors, and interaction among the participants, between the teacher and learners and among learners, comprises an essential part of the dynamic process of classroom language learning.

The teacher in the language classroom is not only the main source of content knowledge but the language of the teacher also becomes a model for learners. The teacher's language, commonly referred to as teacher talk, has been found to provide a great amount of target language to which students are exposed in the classroom (Chaudron, 1988; Cook, 1996). According to Wong-Fillmore (1985), good teacher talk exhibited features of clear separation of languages void of alteration or mixing, focus on comprehension and communication, grammatical language use suitable to the activity, tailoring of elicitation questions to draw out varied levels of student participation, and richness of language. Similar features were identified in Pica and Doughty's (1985) study which showed the teacher's language to be grammatically accurate serving as a model for learners. In a study on teacher discourse in French as a foreign language, Guthrie (1987) examined the role of teacher talk and concluded that the teacher's feedback with sincere interest and respect using content-oriented activities was helpful in fostering student talk and participation.

While studies support the important role teacher talk plays in the language classroom, at the same time, the teacher's language has been questioned for its appropriateness as target language input. For example, Guthrie pointed out that, overall, teacher talk was routine and limited, and along the same line, Henzl (1979) reported that teachers made lexical, phonological, and grammatical adjustments to modify their language according to the proficiency level of learners. Investigating the use of question forms, Long and Sato (1983) found that teachers used higher portions of display questions whereas natural native speaker (NS)-nonnative speaker (NNS) conversations included more referential questions.

In the second language classroom, the teacher is not the only source of target language. Although not comparable to the teacher's target language use in quantity or quality, given that learners are constantly exposed to the target language use of one another, learner language and its influence as target language input also deserve attention.

Research on learner language in the classroom has generally been discussed in the context of learner group work focusing on meaning negotiation. Studies have presented results in favor of learner group work as opposed to teacher-directed learning on the account that it elicited more instances of negotiation and thus more amount of target language use by learners (Doughty & Pica, 1986; Rulon & McCreary, 1986). Long and Porter's (1985) review of research on learner group work also reported that group work supplied learners with more practice of the target language exposing learners to varied language functions. These studies highlight the potential of learner language as target language input under the assumption that more learner group work leads to more negotiation interactions that lead to more and varied use of the target language, and

eventually, to language development. Such discussions add weight to the idea that learner language can work as a viable source of target language; however, concerns that learner language is likely to be restricted in providing grammatically accurate input (Pica & Doughty, 1985) are also present in the literature and thus caution accepting such potential functions of learner language at face value.

As noted above, studies on teachers' language and learners' language as the two main sources of target language input in the second language classroom do not present clear-cut findings. Findings on teachers' language are largely based on research focusing on the teacher's language in teacher-led class formats. Features of learners' language are derived from investigations of teacher-led versus learner group discussions, and are often centered on comparisons of features related to meaning negotiation. Such studies have mostly been directed towards obtaining quantified results of negotiation features such as clarification requests, comprehension checks, confirmation checks, and repetitions. Moreover, studies that have comparatively looked at negotiation interactions in teacher-led and learner group forms have done so under conditions in which different tasks were used as the learning materials in the two contexts. One could argue that engaging in discussions of different topics will require language use of different varieties of vocabulary, structures and functions. Hence, any characterization of features regarding the language of the teacher and learners would only present a limited picture. Rulon and McCreary's (1986) study, although using tasks of the same topic, examined negotiation of content in teacher-fronted and small group interactions for quantitative identification of negotiation devices.

It is in this context that the present study set out to investigate the nature of the two types of target language as found in the second language classroom. The study examined salient features identified in the language of the teachers and learners with respect to specified language learning objectives when the teachers and learners engaged in discussion tasks of the same topic for a descriptive understanding of the types of target language input learners are exposed to in the language classroom.

III. METHOD

1. Participants and Setting

The participants in this study are adult English as a Second Language (ESL) students and teachers in two Listening/Speaking classes in an ESL program affiliated with a large university in the United States. The 23 students in the two classes ranged from 18 to 41 in age and had diverse backgrounds of Brazil, Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and Panama. The

teachers, Ms. Kasy and Ms. June¹ were both native speakers of English and had taught at the program for about five years with much previous ESL teaching experience. Based on the placement test administered by the program, the students in the two classes were diagnosed to be at a low-intermediate level in terms of their listening and speaking skills. Being at similar levels, the two classes followed a common curriculum using the same textbook, *New Interchange 3* (Richards, Hull, & Proctor, 2001). The lessons in the two classes proceeded according to the units in the textbook, and the teachers employed various teaching methods of lectures, discussions, and pair/group work. There were 13 students in Ms. Kasy's class and 10 students in Ms. June's class. The Listening/Speaking classes were held three times a week for about an hour and thirty minutes each.

2. Data Collection Procedure

For the present study, the students in each class engaged in discussion tasks in three groups of three to four students² per group. The three groups were formed randomly and were designated as Group I, Group II, and Group III. The discussion tasks were a part of the student textbook designed to elicit discussion and use of target language objectified in each unit. In keeping with the purpose of the present study to examine closely the language of the teachers and learners as sources of target language input in the classroom, one group of students worked on the task with the teacher while the other two groups carried out the task on their own. This way, investigation of the features of the two types of target language when working on the same tasks requiring comparable language use would be possible. The three groups rotated and took part in discussion tasks across the three units of Unit 5, Unit 6, and Unit 8 in the textbook so that each of the three groups would equally have a language learning opportunity with the teacher as well as with other learners. In other words, when Group I worked with the teacher in Unit 5, the other two groups of students were on their own. Then in Unit 6, it was time for Group II to try a discussion task with the teacher while the other two groups were on their own, and finally in Unit 8, Group III had a chance to work with the teacher with the other two groups working on their own. For each discussion task, the teacher explained the basic learning objectives and the general procedures for the task to the class as a whole. Then, the learners and the teacher went into their respective groups to work on the task. By collecting data across the three

¹ Pseudonyms are used for the teachers, and the students are represented in numbers. Students in Ms. Kasy's class are numbered from S1 to S13, and the students in Ms. June's class are numbered from S21 to S30.

² Taking into account the number of students in each of the two classes, three groups of three to four students were decided appropriate. However, with 13 students in the class, one group in Ms. Kasy's class consisted of five students.

units in the two classes, analysis of emerging patterns could be supported with more substantial evidence as well as avoid features idiosyncratic to an incident or class.

For the data, the discussions were audio- and video-recorded. In addition to an audio cassette recorder placed in the middle of the table of each group, a digital camcorder was placed near each group to capture the overall scene of the discussion interactions and any nonlinguistic features that may influence language use during the tasks. Across the three units and the two classes, 18 group discussions were recorded for data.

The discussion tasks were derived from the student textbook with slight modifications for the present study. During the discussions, the teachers and the learners were expected to perform as they would in everyday class conditions. Other than the arrangements for the groups and the recording process, the research phenomena were investigated under regular class situations. Consent forms asked the participants for permission to be recorded during the discussion tasks pertaining to the units of interest for the study.

3. Analysis

In analyzing each type of target language collected as data, I adopted the discourse analysis approach to second language acquisition and the ethnographic microanalysis approach as the theoretical perspectives guiding the analysis. The discourse analysis perspective on second language acquisition takes the view that language learning occurs through learning to interact in conversations (Hatch, 1978). This view to language learning allowed analytical scrutiny into how the language of the teachers and the learners became manifested in the discussion tasks and in the learners' language learning process. Perspectives from the field of ethnographic microanalysis also informed the analytical interpretations of how the "speaking and listening are socially organized as a collective activity" (Erickson, 1996, p. 298) within the second language classroom context.

The transcribed data were carefully reviewed within the overarching theoretical perspectives informing the analysis, and in particular, with respect to the specific learning objectives pursued in each unit. The learning objectives for each unit described in the *Plan of the Book* page of the student textbook *Interchange 3* are summarized in Table 1. Because the tasks were based on the particular learning points, salient features of the ways in which the language of the teachers and learners provided target language input relevant to the learning objectives along with emerging features noted in the discourse of the discussions comprised the center of analysis.

As significant features emerged, each feature was examined in the data across the three units as well as across the two classes to validate the interpretation and prevent identification of a unique incident. Yet at the same time, analytical decisions remained open for any feature noteworthy of discussion. The results of the analysis are discussed with

examples from the data that are representative of the analytical interpretations.

TABLE 1
Learning Objectives of Units

Unit	Learning Objectives
<i>Unit 5</i>	-Talking about expectations using the <i>be (not) supposed to, be (not) expected to, be (not) the custom to, and be (not) acceptable to</i> structures
<i>Unit 6</i>	-Describing problems and explaining something needs to be done using the <i>need + passive infinitive and need + gerund</i> structures
<i>Unit 8</i>	-Talking about ways to learn to do things using the <i>by + gerund</i> structure and the necessary qualities

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, significant features of the teachers' language identified in the analysis are discussed first followed by salient features of the learners' language.

1. Language of Teachers

Analysis of the teachers' language in the six group discussions revealed five distinctive features.

1) Facilitative³ Language

The teachers in the two classes used language that helped facilitate the students' participation in the discussion tasks. Oftentimes, the teachers' language was concerned with organizing the progression of the task and maintaining the students' attentions on the learning objectives. Such qualities allowed more opportunities for the students to produce target language relevant to the task. The following (1) is an example.

(1) Ms. Kasy (T) with Group III Unit 8

((on ways to lose weight and be in good shape))

1 S11: Another lose weight and be in=

2 T: =You all ready to move on to the next one?

3 S11: Yeah.

4 T: You wanna move on to the next one?

5 Okay move on to the next one.

³ The term *facilitative* is used in its general meaning in this paper.

- 10 S12: By (1.0) why? ((to S10))
 11 S10: Ah no.
 12 S12: By understanding uh friend's mind.
 13 S11: [Yeah:.
 14 T: [Good good.
 15 S13: Your thinking?
 16 T: ((to S9)) Did you hear him S9? You shook your head yes, did you
 17 understand S12? You agree?
 18 S9: Yeah I I agree.
 19 T: Good.
 20 S9: [()
 21 T [By understanding your friend's mi:nd their thoughts. Good by
 22 understanding.=

In (2), the teacher and the students were discussing ways to be a good friend using the *by + gerund* structure. In response to the students' formulation of their ideas on how to be a good friend, the teacher repeated the students' answers (lines 4, 9, and 21). The teacher's repetition validated the students' answer to the group and also provided the students a chance to be exposed to the language in fluent pronunciation. Yet, a more significant function can be pointed out. When Ms. Kasy reuttered what the students had said, she took the opportunity to support and make adjustments for any awkwardness. For instance, to S11's answer of "by: uh: (.) taking taking care your friend" in lines 1 and 2, the teacher made the adjustment of adding the "of" and repeated "Taking care of your friends." Again when S13 offered, "Be a good friend by having a good humor?" in line 8, Ms. Kasy restated the answer but with the better phrase "By having good humor." Finally, in line 12, S12 contributed his idea of "By understanding uh friend's mind," and S13 tried to clarify the answer by adding her understanding of "mind" as "Your thinking?" The teacher followed up by reiterating S12's answer incorporating S13's comment thus organizing it as "By understanding your friend's mi:nd their thoughts."

Teachers' repetition of students' utterances in SLA research is commonly understood in the context of modification devices employed in meaning negotiations in NS-NNS interactions. Studies have revealed that other repetitions were frequently used by NSs to avoid communication breakdowns (Long, 1983a; Pica & Doughty, 1985). The quantified descriptions, however, did not seem to detail the nature of the repetitions. From Lyster and Ranta's (1997) point of view, this type of teacher language in the language classroom is categorized as recasts which involve the teacher implicitly reformulating students' utterances without the problematic part.

The literature on first language discussion provides further insights for understanding

teachers' reiteration of students' utterances. In classroom discussions in the first language, the teacher has been found to scaffold student dialogue and learning by reuttering students' contributions (Cazden, 2001; Maloch, 2000). By reiterating, the teacher reformulates students' utterances to clarify content and support progression in the discussions. This notion of scaffolding has also been accepted in SLA research to refer to the provision of target language structures to learners through conversational interactions (Chaudron, 1988). Engaging in conversational sequences with interlocutors in the target language can scaffold learners to notice and gradually incorporate aspects of the target language in meaningful ways. The teachers' repetition in the present study can also be interpreted as supporting the students' language development by reformulating their utterances and supplying the appropriate input.

3) Focus on Learning Objectives

The teachers' language provided accurate language with regard to the objective structures and elicited use of the structures from the learners. The following (3) are examples found in the data.

(3) Ms. June with Group II Unit 6

((on solutions to the problems shown in a picture of an apartment))

- 1 T: So here the blanket is torn, the headphone is torn. Now the way
- 2 you fix a blanket is different from the way you fix a headphone
- 3 ((S25 does gesture of sewing)). So do you know that word?
- 4 S25: Stick stike.
- 5 T: To sew ((does gesture of sewing)).
- 6 S25: To sew I don't know how to spell that.
- 7 T: S-e-w. You can also say repaired. Fixed.
- 8 S27: Or sewn.
- 9 T: Sewn exactly and
- 10 S27: And uh we uh the (2.0) the--
- 11 S25: =How do you spell?
- 12 T: S-e-w is the [verb.]
- 13 S27: [Yeah] s-e s-e s-e-w or s-a-w.
- 14 T: S-e-w-n (). [The past participle.]
- 15 S27: [Yeah, s-e-w-n.]
- 16 S25: W-n.
- 17 T: The blanket needs to be sewn perfect. Or say it with the gerund?
- 18 S27: The the blank the blanket needs sewing.

- 19 T: Sew-ing.
 20 S27: Sew-ing.
 21 T: Sew-ing [very good.]
 22 S27: [Sew-ing.]
 23 T: Now there's another useful verb for fabric and that's 'mend' 'to
 24 mend'. It means repair so you could also say the blanket needs to
 25 be mended.
 26 S27: Mended.
 27 T: M-e-n-d m-e-n-d. And it means repair, particularly with fabrics and
 28 clothing and so the blanket needs to be mended, or use it with a
 29 gerund S26? Use it with a gerund and try that verb.

In (3), Ms. June asked the students about the ways to fix the torn blanket. S25 motioned *sewing* showing she had the concept but did not have the vocabulary. Ms. June offered the lexical item *to sew* along with *repaired* and *fixed*, and S27 provided the past participle *sewn*. In the following turns working out the spelling, Ms. June spelled out *s-e-w-n* and highlighted that this was the past participle form. In her next turn, she modeled the correct *need + passive infinitive* structure with "The blanket needs to be sewn" and asked the students to try using the *need + gerund* form (line 17). S27 answered "the blanket needs sewing" for which the teacher corrected the gerund form to *sewing*. The following (4) is another example falling into this category.

(4) Ms. Kasy with Group I Unit 5

((on acceptable or not acceptable cultural norms in the United States))

- 1 S3: Too expensive.
 2 T: Do you all agree? ((students nod)) So it's more than it was- not so
 3 much that it was not pretty or whatever but maybe it was just so
 4 expensive. It made her feel uncomfortable. So then go to the next
 5 question. Question number two. (2.0) What was she supposed to do
 6 in the U.S. culture? What do you all think?
 7 S1: Flower.
 8 T: Flowers! Okay okay. Any other ideas?
 9 S4: Candy.
 10 S1: Appetizer.
 11 T: What [candy? Flowers.]
 12 S4: [Or chocolate.]
 13 T: Candy chocolate?
 14 S3: Some some food?

- 15 T: Okay.
 16 S2: By herself (foo:d).
 17 T: You mean make something herself, take a little desert or
 18 something okay, okay. But bring something but just not an
 19 expensive gift. Is that what you're thinking? Okay good. You
 20 wanna move to the next one? This one may be easier I don't know,
 21 the gentleman who bowed. So what went wrong? What happened
 22 that was not supposed to happen? Maybe this has happened to you.

The (4) from Unit 5 had the language use of *be (not) supposed to*, *be (not) expected to*, *be (not) the custom to*, and *be (not) acceptable to* as its learning objectives. In lines 2 and 17, Ms. Kasy starts to recap the students' ideas on the topic. Through these turns, the teacher checked the students' understanding, clarified their comments, and organized the flow of the task by directing the students to the next topic. In the process of facilitating the transition to the next question, the teacher produced the learning objective *be supposed to* with emphasis (lines 5 and 22). Her application of the structure brought the students' attentions to the particular objective structure and modeled its use. As demonstrated in (4), the teachers' language in the tasks was concentrated not only on modeling the correct objective structures but also on facilitating the correct use from the learners. This feature becomes even more significant when compared with the learners' language in the learner groups working on the same tasks shown in a later section.

4) Provides Lexical Items

A fourth feature of the teachers' language involved the teachers providing the necessary lexical items that the learners could not produce themselves. For instance, in example (3) presented in the previous section, S25's motion of sewing showed she had the idea but could not retrieve the corresponding lexical item (lines 3 and 4). Ms. June provided the lexical item *to sew* and the discussion to figure out the spelling and the forms for constructing the objective structures continued. As the discussion on the lexical item *sew* came to a resolution, the teacher skillfully took advantage of this occasion to introduce the alternative lexicon *mend* and modeled its use in the *need + passive infinitive* structure (lines 23 to 25). She went on to further this learning event by eliciting the use in the gerund form from the students (lines 28 and 29).

The teachers' support with the lexical items was essential for maintaining and developing the discussions. Without the assistance, it is likely that these second language learners would proceed with the incorrect lexicon jeopardizing comprehension of the interlocutors and perhaps encounter communication problems. Or, the learners may end up

being discouraged and completely abort the attempt to express their ideas. These points are noticeable in the learner-only group discussions.

5) Provides Corrective Feedback

A fifth and final feature commonly found in the teachers' language is the provision of corrective feedback to the students' output. As the expert in the classroom, the teacher intervened to treat errors made by the students involving vocabulary, pronunciation, and form. The following (5) is an example illustrating this feature.

(5) Ms. June with Group I Unit 5

((on acceptable or not acceptable cultural norms in the United States))

- 1 T: They invited you for a housewarming?
- 2 S21: Housewarming,
- 3 T: Uh-huh.
- 4 S21: or baby washing baby washing baby washing.
- 5 S23: ()
- 6 S21: Baby washing.
- 7 T: What is that?
- 8 S21: Uh: pregnant uh=
- 9 T: =Oh a baby- a party for the baby?
- 10 S21: Baby washing baby washing action. It was action.
- 11 Uh uh if I have a a pregnant friend (1.0)
- 12 S23: Celebrate?
- 13 S21: Yes, uh: together meet the together uh celebration to pregnant to-
- 14 T: Okay has the- was the baby born?
- 15 S21: No no uh:
- 16 T: Okay did they call=
- 17 S21: =it need to be ().
- 18 T: Did they call it a shower? Baby shower?
- 19 S21: Baby shower heh heh heh I hear the baby shower um:.
- 20 T: 'Cause that is the name for that kind of party but I don't know if
- 21 that was what you went to. When people bring gifts because the
- 22 baby will be born, they call it a baby shower.
- 23 S21: Baby shower ohhh uh washing and shower! =

In (5), S21 misused the vocabulary *washing* for *shower* while talking about his experience at a baby shower in the United States (line 4). The teacher did not understand

what S21 meant by *baby washing* and asked “What is that?” (line 7) for clarification. A negotiation process unfolded between the teacher and S21, and after a few questions, the teacher was able to diagnose that S21 had wrongly used the word *washing* for *shower*. Finally, the teacher corrected S21’s error to baby *shower* along with a brief explanation of its definition (line 18 and lines 20 to 22).

The analysis of data showed the teachers’ language was concerned with identifying and treating the students’ errors in vocabulary, pronunciation, and form. In a study looking at teacher-led and peer group ESL discussions, Shi (1998) found that teacher talk more accurately diagnosed and addressed learner errors, whereas peer talk, with a tendency for self-correction, often failed to recognize errors, leaving them neglected. The teachers’ language in the present study demonstrated similar features. It was also clear in the data that not all errors were attended to by the teachers. Errors in learner utterances that had to do with the learning objectives or had the potential of causing comprehension problems seemed to be addressed whereas those of a minor threat to the flow of conversation were disregarded.

2. Language of Learners

With the learners in the present study being at a low-intermediate level of proficiency, concerns of the learners’ language being rather basic for any meaningful analysis are noted with caution. Yet, the learners’ language in the data is considered significant, for the aim of the study was to provide a descriptive analysis of the learners’ language as is with reference to the learning objectives in the task discussions rather than their random language use. Four salient features of the learners’ language were identified in the 12 learner group discussions. Recall that for each unit, while a group of learners engaged in a task with the teacher, the learner groups worked on the same task on their own.

1) Focus on Learning Objectives

In the task discussions, the learners’ language adhered to the use of the learning objectives pursued in each unit reflecting their knowledge and ability to apply the appropriate structures. In fact, in the course of task work, when their language strayed from the objective points, the learners would raise attention to the objective structures and encourage each other to construct utterances using the structures as shown in (6).

(6) Group III Unit 6 (of Ms. Kasy’s class)

((on solutions to the problems shown in a picture of an apartment))

1 S10: Number five.

- 2 S13: The little table (4.0) the little table needs to be
 3 S9: Changed new one.
 4 S10: Um changed.
 5 S13: changed.
 6 S10: A:nd the wall color (2.0) painted.
 7 S9: The wall needs to be painted.
 8 S10: And number three ah ah seven?
 9 S13: The lightbulb (3.0) [to be changed.]
 10 S10: [Needs to be]
 11 S10: And dusty. [Clean] wash washed or cleaned.

As is exemplified in (6), the students displayed competence and awareness in applying the objective structure *need + passive infinitive* for discussing solutions to the problems. The students used language concurring with the learning objectives and monitored each other's language, supplementing each other's use of the structures. In line 6, when S10 uttered, "A:nd the wall color (2.0) painted," S9 followed up saying "The wall needs to be painted" with the structure refined (line 7). Again, in lines 9 and 10, when S13 uttered, "The lightbulb (3.0) [to be changed,]" S10 noticed the absence of *need* in S13's utterance and quickly overlapped with "[Needs to be]" adjusting S13's formulation of the objective structure.

2) Limited in the Variety of Learning Objectives

Despite the learners' ability to produce language relevant to the task objectives, the learners' language fell short in applying the objective structures in varied forms. As illustrated in the discussion above, the learners displayed knowledge of the structures and competence to use them. Nevertheless, their language during the tasks showed the learners had difficulty in applying varied versions of the objective structures. The example (7) demonstrates these points.

(7) Group III Unit 6 (of Ms. June's class)

((on solutions to the problems shown in a picture of an apartment))

- 1 S30: Oh ah ah yeah. Can I look up the dictionary?
 2 S28: Yeah.
 3 S30: I'm sorry ((looks something up in her electronic dictionary)). Yes!
 4 S28: Yes what?
 5 S30: Sew. Do you know 'sew'?
 6 S28: OH I know sew ((does gesture of sewing)).

- 7 S30: Oh yeah I want to [speak sew yeah.]
 8 S28: [Speak sew.]
 9 S30: That's good.=
 10 S28: =Need to be sew:ed.
 11 S30: Sew:ed um-hm yeah.
 12 S28: Number six.
 13 S30: Dark wall um:: this dark wall::
 14 S28: Need to be recovered recolored recolored.

In (7), S28 and S30 were having difficulty searching for the word *sew*. Not being able to come up with the word, S30 resorted to her electronic dictionary. Once S30 found the appropriate verb, the two students constructed the description in the target structure using the *need + passive infinitive* form, thus “=Need to be sew:ed.” The two students’ discussion for resolving the dark wall in lines 12 to 14 again show the students’ limited application of the objective structures. This result is in contrast when compared to the discussion involving the teacher. Example (3) demonstrated how the teacher’s language not only guided the students to apply the objective structures but also in varied forms. It can be suggested that the students in discussion with the teacher were constantly exposed to the varied use of learning objectives whereas the students in discussion among other learners lacked such learning experiences.

3) Lack of Corrective Feedback

The learners’ language displayed frequent errors with regard to the learning objectives and also in their target language use in general. The errors sometimes were corrected from feedback by other learners, but oftentimes, they were dismissed without any recognition or feedback for opportunities of repair. The learner groups, comprised of learners seemingly with insufficient target language resources, were not able to provide the necessary feedback or correction to each other. The following (8) is an example of this case.

- (8) Group II Unit 8 (of Ms. Kasy’s class)
 ((on qualities needed to speak well in front of many people))
 1 S5: Practice.
 2 S7: Yes yes.
 3 S6: Don’t shy heh heh.
 4 S7: Don’t shy heh heh.
 ((53 turns later the students continue on the same topic.))
 58 S8: Open mind? No?

- 59 S7: Open open mind?
 60 S8: Ah no no no.
 61 S7: No?
 62 S6: ().
 63 S7: Don't shy?
 64 S8: Umm,
 65 S7: Don't be
 66 S8: don't [be shy.]
 67 S6: [Don't be] shy.=
 68 S7: =Don't be shy. Don't be shi:ne, shining?
 69 S6: Shy.

Example (8) illustrates a situation in which the students were not able to give each other adequate feedback during the discussions. For qualities needed to speak well in front of many people, S5 suggested *practice*, and S6 followed up in line 3 with “Don't shy heh heh,” intending, supposedly, to say *not being shy*. Despite its awkwardness, no corrective feedback was offered by any of the students, and the response was simply accepted as a suitable answer, as was confirmed by S7's reiteration in the next turn (line 4). Several turns later, S7 brought up “Don't shy?” again, still in its incorrect form (line 63). Again, no feedback was initiated from the other students. Interestingly, however, in her next turn (line 65), S7 came up with the correction of *be*, and S6 and S8, who could not quite put their finger on what was wrong with the structure up to that point, acknowledged the correctness of the structure (lines 66 and 67). A point to be noted in this exchange is the fact that the students' production of *don't be shy* did not develop further into *not being shy* which would have been the ideal expression in this context. This outcome is noteworthy when discussed in relation to the discussion involving the teacher for the same task. Consider the example (9).

(9) Ms. Kasy with Group III Unit 8

((on qualities needed to improve one's English skills))

- 1 T: If you like to play foot- basketball, the quality would be to be
 2 healthy. To practice English what would help you?
 3 S12: Um:: don't don't be shy.
 4 T: Okay very good.
 5 S11: What?
 6 S12: Don't be shy.
 7 T: [Ask him again.
 8 S13: [Don't be shy.

- 9 S11: I didn't understand.
 10 S13: Don't don't [be shy.]
 11 S12: [Shy.]
 12 S11: Ahh. [Don't]
 13 T: [Be: shy?] Is that [it? No.]
 14 S12: [Don't don't] be shy.
 15 T: Don't be shy. So [not] being =
 16 S12: [Just]
 17 S11: =Yeah. Just talking.
 18 T: Yeah not being shy. Good, it's a good characteristic.

This exchange involving the teacher in a comparable language use context as in (8) describes the type of target language and feedback that the teacher could offer the students. To Ms. Kasy's facilitative language scaffolding the task, (lines 1 and 2), S12 offered his idea "Um:: don't don't be shy." S11's mishearing of what S12 had said led the students through a clarification process, and the teacher, as shown in lines 13 and 15, used this moment to reinforce the structure *don't be shy*. *Don't be shy* was correct language and delivered the intention of S12's idea. Yet, the teacher did not compromise to let this expression pass as acceptable and provided *not being shy* as the accurate way to express the quality of a good speaker (lines 15 and 18).

The two examples (8) and (9) highlight the difference between the language of the teachers and that of the learners and how each may work as models of the target language for the learners. In (9), the teacher's language supplied the students with the corrective feedback proper to the context. This result is in contrast to the exchange amongst the students dealing with similar language use shown in (8). In line with the findings of Gass and Varonis (1989) that repairs in nonnative discourse occur in the direction of the target language, the students in (8) were able to correctly adjust *don't shy* to *don't be shy*. The students' limited target language proficiency, however, seemed to constrain further corrective feedback necessary, and the students could not make full use of this learning opportunity to develop their language to the ideal expression of *not being shy*.

4) Use of Available Resources

The final feature notable of the learners' language is the much greater reliance on available resources to compensate for the insufficient language proficiency. The students in the two classes relied on resources such as the dictionary to convey and comprehend meaning during the discussions. The students showed a tendency to turn to their electronic dictionaries when they encountered communication problems. Although not all, quite a few

students had dictionaries with them throughout the course, and thus in the tasks, every group eventually had access to a dictionary through one or more of the students. Out of the six group discussions involving the teacher, the use of the dictionary by a student was identified in only one group discussion. In comparison, half of the 12 learner-only group discussions included instances in which the students resorted to looking up words in the dictionary. The use of the electronic dictionary by S30 in (7) is representative of this case. Without using the electronic dictionary, S30 might not have succeeded in getting her idea across and might have simply aborted the effort to convey her intentions.

V. CONCLUSION

Given that the language of the teacher and the learners constitute the two main types of target language that learners are exposed to in the language classroom, the nature of the two and how each may work as input deserve careful examination. Along this line, this study has explored the language of the teachers and learners with respect to specified language learning objectives in discussion tasks of the same topic in adult ESL classrooms. A detailed descriptive analysis of each type of discourse as found in discussion tasks revealed distinctive features of the two types of target language.

When the language of the teachers and learners were examined under similar conditions requiring comparable language use, the teachers' language was found to facilitate learners' language use by organizing the flow of the discussion and maintaining focus on the task. The teachers' language reiterated learner utterances as a way of scaffolding the utterances to reformulate and supply appropriate language input. The teachers' language also focused on applying the learning objectives accurately and in varied forms and provided necessary lexical items and corrective feedback. On the other hand, the learners' language exhibited use of the learning objectives, but unfortunately not in varied forms. In addition, presumably due to limited language competence, the learners' language fell short in attending to errors and supplying proper feedback. Finally, the learners' language showed greater use of the electronic dictionary as resources to complement the needed input.

The features of the teachers' language and learners' language found in this study were obtained through a descriptive analysis under comparable language use conditions as naturally observed in the classroom. Thus, the findings from this study further contribute to the knowledge base of this area and, more importantly, give rise to some intriguing issues and implications for language learning and teaching in the classroom.

According to the findings of the study, the role of the teachers' language seems to present more favorable results. In terms of supplying learners with appropriate target language input for language development, the study suggests the teachers' language as

more suitable. This outcome may be taken for granted; yet, it invites controversy for many instructional language learning settings in Korea and world wide. With the attention on the communicative approach, research and practice in language learning and teaching have fondly encouraged learner interaction and group work as desirable instructional approaches. The review of studies on group work and interlanguage support learner group work and the idea that learner language can serve as target language models in the classroom (Long & Porter, 1985). As observed in this study, however, if learner language lacks the adequate functions as target language input, then, promoting language learning through peer/group interaction with the expectation of learner needs being met through each other can turn out to be an inefficient use of class time and learning experience. Addressing learner interaction in the classroom, Pica et al. (1996) pointed out that learners being a “limited source of modified input warrants some caution towards teachers’ confidence in this practice” (p. 80).

It has been noted in the literature that teachers’ language can be restricted in variety of the target language system (Guthrie, 1987). However, in language classes in which a lesson is often centered on certain learning objectives, it may be inevitable that the teachers’ language is directed towards the use of particular target language, and thus limited in variety relative to the total target language system. With regard to the specific learning objectives in the present study, it was the teachers’ language that displayed varied use of the objective structures providing learners with input and practice in varied forms. For the learners, the teachers’ language seemed to better support their language learning compared to learners’ language which was inadequate for offering the needed input. Hence, careful examination of the pedagogical effects and implications seems warranted for peer/group interaction in the language classroom.

For the purpose of the study, the teachers in the two classes stayed in one group during the discussion tasks. It would be rare in normal classroom situations for the teacher to stay with one group. Normally, and hopefully, the teacher moves around groups carefully monitoring and assisting learners. In such cases, the teacher should make effort to devote a fair amount of time to each group to provide learners with sufficient input and time to model the learners’ language use. The teacher can also model the language use prior to going into group work and thoroughly cover learning points in the wrap-up stage to address the language use not dealt with properly among learners on their own. Such considerations can foster optimal use of learner interaction and learner language especially in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts such as Korea where there exists the temptation for learners to slip into their mother tongue.

The present study was conducted in two ESL classes belonging to a low-intermediate level. Therefore the data may have been limited, and the findings may be confined to the specific level. Additionally, the participants, although from general communication classes,

may have been narrowed to a particular range of learners for the program was affiliated with a large institutional organization. For future research, examination of a diverse population with different proficiency levels and backgrounds could broaden the scope of research. Also, an EFL classroom setting comprised of a nonnative teacher and monolingual learners seems an interesting territory to explore.

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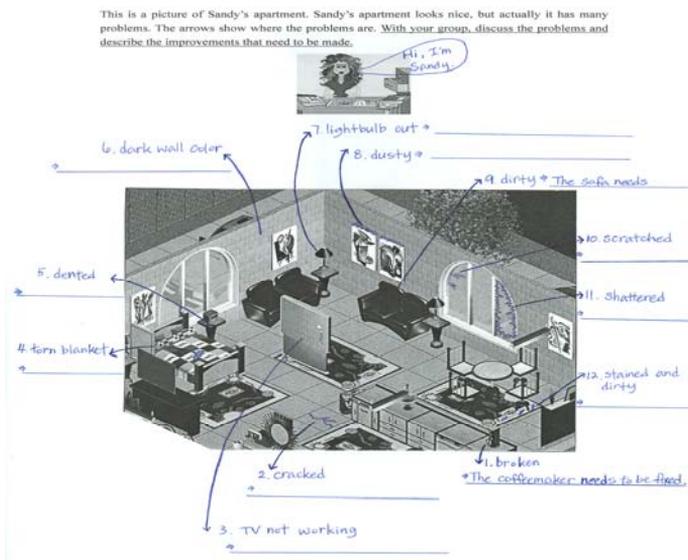
APPENDIX A

Task for Unit 5

* The following are situations that happened in the U.S. Discuss what you think went wrong and talk about what you are supposed to do in these situations in U.S. culture.

1. Rosa is an international student here in the U.S. One day, she got invited to her American friend's home for dinner. She was very excited and wanted to bring a gift for her friend. Rosa decided to get something really nice, so she bought a nice luxurious handbag from a famous designer. When Rosa gave the gift to her friend, her friend seemed uncomfortable. Rosa was embarrassed and worried that she did something wrong.
 - 1) What do you think went wrong here? How do you think Rosa's friend felt and why?
 - 2) What do you think Rosa was supposed to do in this situation in U.S. culture?
2. Jing, a 28-year-old man from China, was on a business trip to a company in New York. When Jing met the president of the company for the first time, the president held out his hand to shake hands. However, Jing did not shake hands with the president. Instead, Jing bowed to the president, but the president seemed puzzled. He even seemed a bit offended.
 - 1) What do you think went wrong here? How do you think the president felt and why?
 - 2) What do you think Jing was supposed to do in this situation in U.S. culture?
3. Padina and Lorella are international students who have been in the U.S. for about a month now. A few days ago, they went to a nice restaurant for dinner. They enjoyed the food and service at the restaurant. When Padina and Lorella finished their meal, they paid the amount on the bill and left a dollar on the table. As they were leaving, they noticed a disappointed look on the waiter's face.
 - 1) What do you think went wrong here? How do you think the waiter felt and why?
 - 2) What do you think Padina and Lorella were supposed to do in this situation in U.S. culture?

Task for Unit 6



Task for Unit 8

* With your group, discuss the specific ways and the qualities needed to do these things well.

	Qualities Needed
<i>Example: 1. play basketball well:</i> -You can play basketball well by watching basketball games on TV. - A good way to play basketball well is by practicing every day.	good health, cooperation, practice...
2. improve your English skills:	
3. be a good friend:	
4. lose weight and be in good shape:	
5. speak well in front of many people:	

APPENDIX B

Transcription Conventions (Jefferson 1979, cited in Schiffrin 1994)

- [[utterances starting simultaneously (in the present study, this symbol is represented with a single bracket placed in front of each of the two lines that start simultaneously)
- [] indicates the beginning and end of overlapping utterances that do not start simultaneously
- = indicates no interval between adjacent utterances, the second being latched immediately to the first
- (.0) intervals in the stream of talk are timed in tenths of a second (for the present study, intervals were timed in seconds) and represented in parentheses
- (.) intervals of less than one second
- : colons indicate an extension of the sound or syllable it follows
- .
- a period shows a stopping fall in tone, not necessarily the end of a sentence
- ,
- a comma shows a continuing intonation, not necessarily between clauses of sentences
- ?
- a question mark indicates a rising inflection, not necessarily a question
- !
- indicates an animated tone, not necessarily an exclamation
-
- a single dash indicates a halting, abrupt cutoff; multiple dashes hyphenating syllables of a word or connecting strings of words indicate a stammering quality
-
- underlining indicates emphasis
- (()) items enclosed in double parentheses describe some phenomenon of the talk such as details of the conversation or conversational scene
- () items enclosed in single parentheses are in doubt; when single parentheses are empty, hearing could not be achieved
- CAPS** capital letters indicate an utterance that is spoken louder than the surrounding talk

Applicable levels: college/higher

Key words: L2 classroom discourse and interaction, teacher language, learner language, input

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