Inducing Participation in a CBI Classroom

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This study explored the factors that lead college-level EFL adult learners to participate productively in speaking in a Content Based Instruction (CBI) course. Having investigated how the classroom tasks and environments scaffolded the learners to participate, the study considered factors for motivating students to engage in classroom discussion in spontaneous, voluntary speaking. The findings of this study are discussed through a sociocultural approach. Based on an analysis of the classroom observation and interview data, the study suggests that scaffolding devices and classroom environment play a significant role in encouraging and promoting output performance. The study suggests that four types of scaffolding should be available for a CBI course to facilitate participation in a spontaneous speaking mode: clear guidelines for comprehension and participation; tasks appropriate for the learners’ cognitive and linguistic level; an emotionally supportive environment formed by rapport among classmates; and instructional aids to increase motivation and willingness to participate.

Key words: CBI, participation/output/speaking opportunities and performance, scaffolding, EFL adult learners

1. INTRODUCTION

Having examined how EFL adult learners participated in a CBI course, the current study attempted to make suggestions for types of instructional methodologies that could be more effective for L2 learners to gain output opportunities to practice and use the target language in a productive mode of speaking. A most desired outcome for second language (L2) instruction is the ability to produce the language through spoken and/or written output.

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When it is considered that “while most would agree that uninhibited output is an essential objective, however, views vary on its role in L2 acquisition and the optimal format for output-based instructional techniques” (Toth, 2013, p. 4343), studies of what and how it should be implemented to increase classroom participation for various groups of L2 learners are arguably needed. Between the cognitive theories viewing output as a simple reflection of acquisition and the sociocultural theories seeing it as an essential catalyst for development since it assumes that L2 learning is considered more as building participation in L2 communities than as acquiring an abstract system (Toth, 2013), the current study holds that “L2 output should reflect a broadly conceived communicative competence embracing both linguistic and sociocultural aspects of L2 speech community” (Toth, 2013, p. 4345).

Meanwhile, the current study is in line with communicative language teaching (CLT) approach, which is based on the theoretical assumption that “the primary function of language use is communication” (Brandl, 2008, p. 5) in real life, which draws inspiration from linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics. Instructional methods associated with the CLT approach are, to a large extent, those which are “oriented toward enabling the learners to function in social situation” (Adamson, 2004, p. 611). In that regard, content-based instruction (CBI) along with task-based instruction (TBI) has been regarded as a major instructional implementation to fulfill the promises of the CLT approach. The rational of CBI or content-language integrated instruction (CLIL) which has been the European implementation of CBI since 1999 (Jarviene, 2005) is that “natural language acquisition takes places in context and CBI provides a context in which meaningful language can be acquired; students learn best when there is an emphasis on relevant, meaningful content rather than on the language itself” (Macaro, Vanderplank, & Murphy, 2010, p. 51).

Since the majority of second or foreign language learning occurs in school contexts (Crystal, 2003), CBI can be even more seriously considered for EFL adult learners like college students who are expected to use the L2 professionally for their current study and future job. Since CBI practices the assumption that “language can be effectively taught through the medium of subject matter” and views “the target language as the vehicle through which subject matter content is learned rather than as the immediate object of study” (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 2008, p. 5), it is supposed to help the learners function in the L2 competently and appropriately for their age and cognitive experience including their educational background.

As one purpose of CBI is to support L2 learners in acquiring L2 abilities required for their current and future needs, research on CBI should be able to address how a CBI course may serve the L2 learners “whose needs are anchored in language, but whose goals extend to mastery of academic, professional and technical content and skills” (Pica, 2009, p. 76)
more effectively. In this vein, the participants of the current study may represent those individuals who are “learning another language in their own country in order to partake in regional or global exchanges” and thereby such learners “typically have little need to develop informal registers” (McKay & Rubdy, 2009, p. 12) of the target language since they can use their L1 for informal and intimate needs.

While immersion programs which are among the various types of CBI implementations showed that its contribution to improving comprehension skills such as listening and reading, and has been effective in those skills almost native-like, it has been pointed out that they need to address production skills also if they are to help the learners attain desired level of proficiency and thus function successfully not only as a competent listener and reader but also as an active speaker and writer (Harley & Swain, 1984; Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Observation of immersion programs in Canada led educators and researchers to argue that “the learners engaged in too little language production because the classes were largely teacher-centered” (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p. 156). Such an instructional practice may be found in CBI classes held in EFL context also in Korea as well. The current study was an endeavor to fill in the gap in the CBI research in order to address the question of how to promote production opportunities through which CBI effects can be capitalized on assisting the L2 learners in improving their productive skills so that they are able to function actively in the L2 environment. It is expected to complement what is considered as relative weaknesses of CBI.

Just as Swain “advocated more opportunities for learners to engage in verbal production (i.e., output) in French immersion classrooms” (Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p. 119), the current study attempts to find a means of promoting output opportunities by fostering the necessary conditions and environment in which the learners can practice production skills in an authentic way, and thus learn to use the L2 for real situations more confidently and professionally. The current study has specifically attempted to find what can induce spontaneous and voluntary speaking practice in an environment in which age- and grade level-appropriate academic information was dealt with along with relevant scaffolding.

Scaffolding is defined as “the process that assists the learner in getting to the next point in development.” In sociocultural theory, it consists of “social assistance by other people rather than of physical resources such as dictionaries” (Cook, 2008, p. 228). In Vygotskian sociocultural theory, scaffolding is realized by providing learners with “just sufficient assistance to enable them to accomplish through collaboration what they could not accomplish on their own” (Batstone, 2010, p. 8). But it should be remembered that “in an SLA context, scaffolding has been used in many diverse senses” (Cook, 2008, p. 229). With this in mind, the current study examined the types of classroom tasks and situations that could serve as scaffolding devices contributing to promoting adult learners’ participation in the CBI course. The study was guided by the following research questions:
1. What motivates the college EFL learners to engage in a CBI classroom in a spontaneous and voluntary speaking?

2. What are the critical factors contributing to the increase of output opportunities for EFL college learners participating in a CBI course?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Content-Based Instruction (CBI)

CBI is theoretically based on “communicative competence, which emphasizes the socially appropriate and meaningful use of language, that is, knowing how to effectively use language rather than knowing about the language” (Lotherington, 2004, p. 707). CBI or content-based language instruction (CBLI) and its European counterpart, CLIL, aims to create “interesting, meaningful instruction that taps into learners’ interests and needs, in a variety of settings, with students of different age groups and educational levels” (Snow, 2013, p. 907). In a more general sense, CBI is defined as “a form of language instruction in which academic content topics from other, non-language subjects are used to organize the curriculum and support language learning” (Llinares, Morton, & Whittaker, 2012, p. 332). In principle, CBI views “the grade-level curricula as relevant, meaningful content” (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004, p. 9) for English language learners and CBI instructors are supposed to develop content-based curricular and accompanying instructional strategies (Echevarria et al., 2004).

While the CBI is identified with three prototype models such as theme-based instruction, sheltered instruction (SI), and adjunct instruction, “each prototype is practiced along with variations since numerous innovations have arrived on the scene” (Brinton, 2013, p. 901). For example, research has shown that “a great deal of variability exists in the design of SI courses and the delivery of SI lessons, even among trained teachers (August & Hakuta, 1997; Berman, McLaughlin, Minicucci, Nelson, & Woodworth, 1995; Kauffman et al., 1994; Sheppard, 1995) and within the same schools. Thus, “one SI classroom does not look like the next in terms of the teacher’s instructional language, the tasks the students have to accomplish, and the degree of interaction” (Echevarria et al., 2004, p. 13).

As far as it is an effective SI classroom, however, they can find “a high level of student engagement and interaction with the teacher, with other students, and with text, which leads to elaborated discourse and critical thinking” (Echevarria et al., 2004, p. 14). In a more practical sense, an SI course is considered “a content course taught by a ‘language sensitive’ content specialist to a segregated group of learners, thereby ‘sheltering’ the second language learners from native speaking students” (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001, p.
Thus, SI instructors naturally try to help the students comprehend what transpires in the classroom including lectures, by articulating and employing supportive materials. The course observed by the current study was considered to be an SI as well as a ‘strong’ form of CBI, in which content alone determines what language is used (Wesche & Skehan, 2002).

### 2.2. Output in L2 Learning

The rationale for output in L2 development and acquisition, as Swain argued, is that “reliance on L2 comprehensible input allows students to bypass syntactic processing and to rely on semantic processing to make sense of L2 materials” (Mitchell, 2009, p. 679). She suggested that only the requirement that students produce the L2 for communicative purposes will force them to make hypotheses about the syntactic structure of the target language” (ibid.). The output hypothesis put forward by Swain (1985, 1995, & 2005) was an alternative to the input hypothesis proposed by Krashen (1985) from the late 1970s.

While the input hypothesis claims that “for language acquisition to take place, all that is required is that the learner should be provided with, and pay attention to, L2 input that is comprehensible yet a little beyond her developmental stage” (Mitchell, 2009, p. 678), the output hypothesis insists that input alone is not enough for L2 acquisition.

The output hypothesis highlights “the need to speak or write,” which makes “learners pay attention to aspects of grammar which they would not need for comprehension purposes alone and thus makes them notice gaps in their knowledge” (Littlewood, 2004, p. 519). By producing the language, they gain opportunities to test their current “hypotheses about how the grammatical system works” and “whether these hypotheses are correct. It stimulates them to discuss the language with others and thus ‘scaffold’ each other” (ibid.). It is argued that “Swain’s ‘forced output’ furthers acquisition” (Macaro, 2010, p. 91) because it “operates as a metalinguistic function – encouraging learners to think about linguistic information. This contributes to consolidating knowledge” (Macaro, 2010, p. 92).

While “Swain’s early work on the output hypothesis was influenced by cognitive theory, but more recent work has been motivated by sociocultural theory” emphasizing “collaborative dialogue” with the position that “language use and language learning can co-occur. It is language use mediating language learning.” (Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p. 119). Having been aware of the role and functions of output, the current study tried to address how output opportunities are induced and what would make the participants take advantage of these in a CBI course. By determining the types of classroom tasks and conditions to be implemented to encourage participants to produce language in the spoken modality, the study is intended to offer suggestions for how the instruction and classroom environment can be organized. Under the social view of language acquisition, participation in CBI classrooms is understood as “a social activity” while second language use is
considered “part of subject learning and the processes of second language development” (Llinares et al., 2012, p. 12). The current study was in particular interested in how to construct the classroom environment for more opportunities to use the language through peer scaffolding and the instructor’s assistance.

2.3. Scaffolding

The term ‘scaffolding’ is being used “as a metaphor for the particular kinds of support given to students to enable them to successfully complete a task” (Gibbons, 2007, p. 703). It is also considered as “a metaphor of learning which refers to those supportive behaviors by which an expert can help a novice learner to gradually achieve higher, independent levels of performance” (Hyland, 2009, p. 209) based on sociocultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1987). The concept of scaffolding which was understood as assistance and resulted in further growth was elaborated with the ‘zone of proximal development,’ or ‘ZPD.’ Perhaps “Vygotsky’s most well-known contribution to psychology and education is his conceptualization of the ‘ZPD’ which is generally described as the difference between what an individual can achieve independently and what s/he can achieve with assistance” (Poehner, 2013, p. 1794). Such assistance is provided by “either a more capable actor or a peer” (Polio & Williams, 2009, p. 499).

In language education for both L1 and L2, scaffolding refers to the nature of “assisted performance” (Gibbons, 2007, p. 703) of any kind, not only promoted by the teachers but also by the students. Vygotsky went on to advocate “the ZPD as a basis for development-oriented pedagogies, reasoning that emergent abilities are most amenable to instructional intervention (Vygotsky, 1987, cited in Poehner, 2013, p. 1795). Particularly L2 learners ‘need to have many opportunities to participate in semiotic practices that promote both higher-order thinking and the use of a range of language functions, such as formulating questions, reasoning, and explaining’ (Handa & Wells, 2013, p. 1692).

In the current study, ‘scaffolding’ was implemented along with ‘collaboration’ in a form of peer interaction in the CBI course through the concept of ‘shared consciousness’ in which “learners working together learn more effectively than individuals working separately” (Hyland, 2009, p. 214). As Vygotsky argued that progress through the ZPD is “not achieved only through input, but rather through social interaction” (ibid.), the study focused on how participants mobilized collaboration with their classmates in an attempt to increase the number of chances to use the language in an interactive and productive way. The study purported to examine the type of critical factors contributing to an increase in output opportunities for EFL college learners to participate productively in speaking in a CBI course and to offer suggestions to foster an appropriate environment in which adult learners can practice speaking skills which can serve their current and future needs.
3. METHOD

The current study was conducted as classroom action research (AR) in order to reflect on what had been transpiring in a CBI course and improve its teaching practice in inducing students’ participation in a college-level EFL context. In the field of applied linguistics, AR is considered as “a way of reflecting on your teaching. It is done by systematically collecting data on your everyday practice and analyzing it in order to come to some decisions about what your future practice should be” (Wallace, 1998, p. 4). In particular, the current study followed the rationale that “research on language learning in classroom environments requires active participation of the teacher-researcher since observations and continuous reflections on teaching and learning are essential” (Kawai, 2008, p. 229), as it employed observation and interview by the instructor-researcher as the main tools of data collection.

The study attempted to “develop insights and instructional strategies that will eventually improve the efficacy and efficiency of L2 learning” (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 267) of the EFL adult learners by observing and listening to them. With the experience and insights earned from an examination of what helped or did not help the students participate in the classroom discussion, future instruction should be able to provide challenging but encouraging conditions and environments for EFL students to learn to participate in the classroom, and thereby they can gain desired level of speaking skills which would reflect their social and cognitive experience.

3.1. Context of the Study

The school at which the current study was conducted encouraged the instructors to offer as many CBI courses as possible along with financial incentives. In particular, the department with which the participants are affiliated has a language policy of providing all the content courses in English. While the students are not admitted on the basis of their English proficiency, most students who are interested in the department are assumed to be aware of the policy. Thus, those who are relatively confident in English tend to apply for the department. The course, Introduction to TESL, observed in the current study was one of the compulsory courses for freshmen in the department. The course deals with educational philosophies, historical overview of foreign and second language education focusing on the English language, and a social, political, cultural and educational understanding of English from different perspectives. It was conducted with readings from Baker (2001), Crookes (2009), Crystal (2003), and Kohlberg and Mayer (1988).
### TABLE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>English Proficiency</th>
<th>Overseas Experience</th>
<th>CBI Experience</th>
<th>Comprehension Level at CBI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Intermediate-Low</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Advanced-Low</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Advanced-Mid</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Advanced-High</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Intermediate-Mid</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Intermediate-High</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>1 course</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* F stands for freshman and J for junior; the participants’ English proficiency was self-assessed as well as observed by the instructor; CBI experience indicates whether they took a CBI course prior to the current one observed in the present study.

Among the 33 students in the course, six were invited for interviews since each was observed by the instructor as representing different characteristics of participation behavior: one participant (P1) did not speak at all especially in a spontaneous mode seemingly due to her lack of linguistic competence; four participants (P2, P3, P5, P6) participated actively regardless of their different levels of English proficiency and different amount of CBI experience; and another participant (P4) rarely participated despite her good linguistic competence. Four of the participants were freshmen while the other two were juniors, for whom it was also the first semester spent in the department, as they transferred from other departments within the school or from an overseas university. Their level of English proficiency and experience in using English turned out to be different from one another, even though they all belonged to the same TESL department. The instructor (the researcher) was a Korean speaker who had offered CBI courses for more than 13 years at the time of the current study. Table 1 shows the summary of the participants’ English language using experience and proficiency level.

### 3.2. Sources of Data

#### 3.2.1. Observation notes

Throughout the semester, observation notes were taken by the instructor to ascertain specific circumstances or conditions promoting participation. All the 33 students in the course, *Introduction to TESL*, were observed in terms of who and how often they made questions or comments voluntarily. One noteworthy fact was that a few students usually posed questions at the end of individual presentations while they rarely did so with the instructor, except for review sessions for midterm and final exams. The contents of the individual presentation involved survey reports, another course assignment, in which each student picked one country and did library research about it. They were to include general
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information such as population, language(s), political and economic systems, historical and cultural characteristics, and information on its education system including English education; no more than four students could choose the same country. Of the 33 students in the course, 32 students did the presentation, all of whom created visual aids such as PPT slides for their presentations.

Table 2 shows what countries were presented about and how many students asked questions at the end of each presentation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Number of Questions Made by the Whole Class</th>
<th>Participants Who Made Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 3, 2014</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 10, 2014</td>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>C, E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brunei</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>C, E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 17, 2014</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>C, E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>5(4)</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1, 2014</td>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>B, C, E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 8, 2014</td>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>C, E, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 15, 2014</td>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 29, 2014</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 5, 2014</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>India</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>E, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>France</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 10, 2014</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>3(1)</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The number within the parenthesis indicates the number of students when one student asked more than one question; e.g., 3(1) means one student asked three questions; otherwise, each student asked one question.

The purpose of having the students perform the individual presentation was twofold: one
was to share their survey reports with classmates so that the whole class could learn how the different countries conduct their English education depending on their particular needs, social environment and resources, which were considered relevant to the course since the TESL students should be informed of how different countries conduct their English education according to their own needs and social conditions; the other was to allow them an opportunity to practice formal speech skills which they need for their future jobs. It was observed that while the TESL students seemed confident in conducting informal conversation to a certain extent, most of them appeared to lack skills that a public speaker should be able to perform. For this presentation task, three tips were given as criteria: (1) Articulate; (2) Make enough eye-contact with the audience; and (3) Be aware of non-verbal aspects of communication as well. After the presentation, each presenter was provided with feedback from the instructor by email with a focus on the three criteria and whether they were satisfactorily met. One presentation lasted 10 to 20 minutes, including Q-&-A.

The observation notes showed another interesting point regarding the role of classroom material encouraging students to participate. When the instructor found that no student asked a question at the end of the first presentations on April 3, 2014, even though they were told to do so, she played a video-clip excerpt of President Obama’s speech at the end of G20 summit held in Korea in 2010. As a gesture of his appreciation to Korea as the conference host, he gave the Korean press an opportunity to ask him questions, which was not announced in advance. Unfortunately, no Korean reporters attempted to ask questions even though the President earnestly tried to solicit questions several times. Instead, a Chinese reporter stood up to ask permission for questions on behalf of the entire Asian press as it seemed the Korean reporters were unable to ask questions. The students reacted to the video-clip with sighs indicating their disappointment about the silence of the Korean press even when they were urged to ask questions. It was observed that the students started asking questions on the following presentations. Thus, their participation could be attributed to the video-clip given the contrast before and after watching it in their attention to the presentations and their participation.

3.2.2. Interviews

The six participants were individually invited for an interview which was semi-structured and conducted in their L1 (Korean). While the interview was conducted with eight interview questions, the participants were encouraged to discuss what they wanted to discuss, especially focusing on what helped or did not help them participate in the class. Each interview was held at the researcher’s office by individual appointment immediately after the semester ended, from June 30 to August 18, 2014. Each interview
lasted about 40 minutes, which was recorded with the interviewee’s consent and transcribed in Korean later. It was translated by the researcher into English for the sake of report for the study. See Appendix A for the interview questions.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings are reported in a form of narrative discussion as the study took a qualitative approach in trying to answer the research questions. Since the “product of a qualitative inquiry is richly descriptive” (Merriam, 2009, p. 16), it attempted to include what the participants discussed and divulged as much as possible, as “the qualitative research is emergent in nature, that is, the research design is kept open and fluid so that it can respond in a flexible way to new details or openings that may emerge during the process of investigation” (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 109). The participants’ responses to the interview questions and their discussions of what led them to participate in the CBI course were compared with one another while their similarities and differences were examined. The participants were coded as Interviewee 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6.

4.1. Comprehension Demand

The analyses of the interview data revealed that comprehension demand was a critical factor which would lead to participation or a lack thereof. While the six interviewees were different in listening comprehension skills and speaking abilities, they, overall, considered that it was relatively easier to understand the individual presentations given by their classmates. Thus, it helped them formulate questions at the end of individual presentations. But they found it harder to answer or ask the instructor questions since they were not sure whether their understanding of the lecture was correct. Their lack of confidence in their understanding of the lecture seemed to prevent them from asking the instructor questions. They were more comfortable speaking and asking questions for the individual presentations because it was easy for them to comprehend the contents of the presentations without difficulties. It seemed that they were not cognitively overloaded by the demand of understanding the individual presentations and considered it as a pleasant experience like Interviewee 5, who turned out to be the second most active participant with nine instances of posing questions at the end of the presentations, reported: “The course was lecture-oriented. But I found the individual presentations interesting and exciting. It was a new experience to me.”

Since they grasped the information presented, they did not have to worry about whether they might miss some parts and possibly ask awkward questions. As far as they were
interested in further points, they were able to ask questions. It seemed that they might enjoy listening to the presenters and were not afraid of asking questions as Interviewee 2 and 5 admitted that

I found individual presentations much easier in terms of making myself willing to ask questions. Above all, I didn’t have a difficulty in understanding the contents of the presentations. It was an interesting experience to ask questions at the end of my classmates’ presentations. (Interviewee 2)

But they found it challenging to understand the lecture and the chapter so that they considered them as “cognitively challenging tasks” (Gibbons, 2002, p. 10). Thus, they were not sure whether they could ask good questions. Without a clear understanding of the lecture and the chapter, they said that they were afraid of possibly asking “stupid” questions, as Interviewee 2 mentioned that “it took more time to think and study. Such academic discussion of English language was almost new to me. And I was too reluctant and shy to ask the instructor about what I couldn’t clearly figure out.” Even when she managed to ask a question, it seemed that it took longer and more effort for her to organize the questions and verbalize them: “I had to think a lot before making questions to the instructor” (Interviewee 2).

The way the participants reacted differently to the two types of information presented by their classmates and the instructor might reflect the fact that they could not acquire cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), even though they were able to use basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) or conversational language skillfully with their current level of English language proficiency and experience. According to Cummins (2000), it would take “about two years of exposure to L2 to acquire BICS while five to seven years was required, on average, for immigrant students to approach grade norms in academic aspects of English” (p. 58). To earn CALP, Cummins suggested that the learners need to be engaged in authentic and cognitively challenging tasks.

In fact, however, all the interviewees except for one (Interviewee 4) complained about the difficulty involved in understanding the lecture as Interviewee 3, the most active participant, said that “unless I read the chapter in advance, it was hard for me to understand the lecture. I tried to read every chapter and every page.” But such a commitment as from Interviewee 3 was not commonly expected for all the students taking the course. Thus, it was assumed that the majority of the students might have difficulty in comprehending the course contents, as Interviewee 5 expressed a similar concern: “Since the concepts presented in each chapter were not familiar to me and I had little background knowledge in TESL, it was hard for me to understand them.”

In addition, the interviewees pointed out that there was no clear guideline concerning
how to make them ready to understand and participate as Interviewee 2 complained:

> While the instructor encouraged us to read the chapter in advance, she did not require it in a form of homework. Worse, she did not follow the order of the information presented in the chapter. Thus, I got lost and wondered which page we were working on. If the instructor made the preview of each chapter compulsory as an assignment along with focus questions, it would help us prepare for each lesson in a more organized way. (Interviewee 2)

Interviewee 5 also expressed regret that “I wished that I had been given focal questions in advance so that I could have time for thinking and prepare for participation” indicating that the importance of instructor’s efforts to provide clear guidelines could not be overemphasized.

### 4.2. Anxiety Toward Participation

While the participants confessed that they were not comfortable and felt anxiety when they tried to speak in the classroom, the data showed that different types of anxiety were experienced by the participants depending on the presenter and how well they were able to understand the contents. In lectures, two types of anxiety were observed: one was caused by difficulties in comprehending the lecture and the chapter; and the other caused by classroom culture such as relationship with classmates and time constraints as Interviewee 3 discussed:

> Even when I had questions, I couldn’t but help be aware of my classmates. Thus, I was reluctant to ask during the class. Especially the questions were assumed to require lengthy response, I’d wait and ask questions individually after the class while I was dare to make questions, during the class, which might be answered briefly. (Interviewee 3)

That is, in addition to the difficulty that the participants experienced in comprehending the lecture contents and chapters, it seemed that the participants were concerned with their classmates’ emotional responses, which would be possibly negative. In the second language acquisition (SLA) literature, “anxiety is quite possibly the affective factor that most pervasively obstructs the learning process. It is associated with negative feelings such as uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension and tension” (Arnold & Brown, 1999, p. 8).

As Interviewee 5 stated that “I found some of my classmates nervous of receiving
questions signaling that I should not ask a question about their presentation, which made me reluctant to make questions,” such an uncooperative mood in the classroom culture was noticed by the observation that the participants appeared to be sensitive to the classmates’ reaction to their questions. It seemed that they were afraid of making the presenter uneasy due to their questions. Especially when they felt that they were not acquainted enough with the presenter, such tendencies worsened as Interviewee 6 admitted:

During the beginning period and up until the midterm period, I was not familiar with the classmates and not really involved in the classroom discussion. I was just sitting back behind in the classroom. I was wondering if I asked questions, they might dislike me. They must want to finish their presentation without having to be bothered to answer any question for which they might not be ready. I was afraid of whether they might feel that I pointed out their weaknesses if I made questions. I was also shy enough not to ask a question publicly in the classroom. I thought that I’d rather ask them questions after class if I had any. But later on, as I got intimate with my classmates, I found it more and more interesting to listen to them and wanted to ask questions without having to worry about how they would feel. Even at some moment I found myself enjoying seeing them embarrassed when they were asked questions. (Interviewee 6)

On the other hand, it seemed that participant variables such as “interlocutor’s relative status, familiarity with each other, and the extent of shared cultural background” (Robinson, 2009, p. 303) played a great role in encouraging or discouraging participants’ willingness to participate in the CBI course. Since the participants might regard the individual presentation as a task through which they shared “equal status and role” (Robinson, 2009, p. 304) with their classmates, and found the “interactant demands” (ibid.) caused by it manageable enough. Thus, it could more effectively induce participants’ participation, at least compared to the instructor’s lectures.

4.3. Support from Fellow-Students

Since the participants found it challenging enough to understand the lecture and chapters, their classmates turned out to be the best source of support, as they sought help from one another like Interviewee 2:

I was so desperate for the help from the classmates. When I was able to read and comprehend the chapter in advance, I managed to understand the lecture. Otherwise, I could not even write down the gist of what the instructor presented. Thus I often
asked my classmates and shared our understanding with each other. For example, I missed the explanation about ‘pidgin’ and ‘creole.’ Once I missed a certain part of lecture, I got lost for the rest of it. I often asked my classmates about what I missed.

(Interviewee 2)

Especially when they had to prepare for in-class exams, they relied on each other to compensate for what they could not comprehend by themselves as Interviewee 2 and 3 mentioned:

I closely worked with my classmates. Especially we formed a study group to prepare for midterm and final exam even though the members changed as the semester proceeded. We started preparing for the exam 3 weeks earlier and divided the chapters making each of us responsible for summarizing a certain portion of the chapters.

(Interviewee 2)

Interviewee 3 and 5 added as well that “we divided what we had to cover for exams and shared my understanding with them” (Interviewee 3); “I formed a study group with a few classmates” (Interviewee 5). What Interviewee 6 said showed how critical it was to seek help from their classmates:

To take the course effectively, I should be able to get along with the classmates. Without friendly classmates, it’s hard to take the course successfully since I needed to be reminded of due dates for assignments and held extra discussion on what I could not comprehend accurately by myself. So we formed an informal study-group with close friends and shared our understanding of the lecture and texts.

(Interviewee 6)

What the participants did can be considered as “co-construction of knowledge” in a form of “peer scaffolding” (Llinares et al., 2012, p. 100) which refers to the “collaboration between learners in which they provide temporary support for each other in carrying out learning tasks” (Llinares et al., 2012, p. 335). Even when the participants could not find a time to physically meet together to share their understanding, they still sought a way to help each other as Interviewee 4 mentioned: “I was too busy to study together. I’d read the chapter in advance by myself and send it on-line to a few classmates to share my understanding of the chapter with them.” Having constructed such an “ecological environment” (Krumsch, 2002, p. 8) through peer scaffolding, the participants seemed able to cope with difficulties they faced in comprehending the contents.

However, such a self-organized support system among the course takers seemed to require a few conditions if it could be sustained and functioned effectively. One of the
conditions was a sense of equal contribution. If any members of a study group might feel that she was being used by free riders and her efforts were not rewarded, then the group dynamics might dissipate, as Interviewee 3 revealed: “Having prepared for midterm exam, I studied with a few close classmates. But for the final exam, I worked on my own since they were not helpful enough preparing for the exam.”

Another condition was willingness and eagerness to be involved in the group work. Interviewee 1 confessed that she was not able to meet minimum requirement of group activity such as time for commitment:

I got help from classmates until the midterm. After the class, I used to sit together with one of my classmates to review what we had learned on that day. But after the midterm exam, I found it harder and harder to manage school life. Thus, I couldn’t find time to review the lessons with her anymore. (Interviewee 1)

Accordingly, her partner saw Interviewee 1’s lack of motivation, thus was not able to help her out: “For the exams, I helped them. In particular I helped her (Interviewee 1). But she was evading and it seemed that it was hard for her to get along with the classmates” (Interviewee 4). What appeared to be a lack of motivation shown by Interviewee 1 might be worsened by her sense of a lack of equal footing in contributing to the group as she mentioned that “Even though I wanted to get some help from my classmates, I knew that I could not repay their help. It was hard to keep asking them about everything I couldn’t figure out” (Interviewee 1). In addition, she talked about the difficulties she faced as a college student:

In general, I don’t know how to study at college. I’m interested in how the other students got competent now. I went to a private institute for extra lessons throughout my elementary and secondary school years. I’d try to listen to English materials a lot such as Arirang TV (a local English TV channel), and I wanted to improve speaking skills as well. As far as general English language skills, I found them improving. But the current level of my English skills was not high enough to meet the demand of college level CBI course. (Interviewee 1)

Since Interviewee 1 rated her English language proficiency as intermediate-low, it would be expected for her to struggle in a strong form of CBI course in which the course takers were not taken care of linguistically. Thus a course taker such as Interviewee 1 might face daunting task of surviving in the course on her own. She complained about the hardship she experienced in the CBI course, which was much harder than other English-medium courses as follows:
I managed to understand 20% to 30% of the contents at the *Introduction to TESL* course. I also found the reading of *Integrative English* (department-developed language course) hard to understand, but I was able to figure out what I was supposed to do at least for the homework. The *GEP* (general English program) course was the easiest one among the three courses. (Interviewee 1)

While she managed to take the other two language courses which were also offered only in English, the content course seemed to place an extra burden on her. As a result, she was not able to participate in any form of speaking even once throughout the semester. Moreover, she could not take advantage of support from the classmates effectively since she did not regard herself as an equally contributing member to the group.

### 4.4. Effects of a CBI Course

All the participants except for Interviewee 1 confessed that they were satisfied with the course mainly for the two reasons. One was that they grew more confident in using the language by taking the course:

As and after I took the course, I’m feeling much more confident in listening and speaking in English. I’m feeling that my writing skills improved as I prepared for midterm and final exams. I prefer taking English-medium courses since they provide opportunities to use the language in a rigorous way. (Interviewee 2)

After taking the course, I’m sure that my English using skills got better. I’m much more confident in speaking and feeling good at speaking in English. I went to a foreign language high school where I took a literature course offered by a native-speaker instructor, which gave me the opportunities to use English in an authentic way. But it was just once. Now I’m content that I can have a good number of CBI courses in which I believe I keep using English, thereby I’ll improve English-using skills. (Interviewee 5)

It was rare to use English at school. But while taking TESL courses which were provided as CBI, I got more and more confident. (Interviewee 6)

The other reason was that the course helped them better understand discipline-specific terms and concepts, thus it made them more academically competent:
Since I’m a TESL major, I prefer taking English-medium courses in which everything is done in English. Having taken the course in English, I became familiar with academic and professional terms in my field and able to explain them in English with confidence. If I learned them in Korean (L1), there must be missing parts in terms of accurately grasping the exact meaning and nuance of the terminology in addition to the translations issues. (Interviewee 3)

Even Interviewee 4 who went to schools from elementary to the second year of college in the USA and considered herself a native speaker of English recognized the effects of taking the CBI course saying that “throughout the course, I learned grammar and essay-writing skills a lot. I had never used English in this kind of formal way until I took the course.” Thus, overall, the interviewees appreciated what the CBI course provided in language and academic experience.

However, for Interviewee 1, it did not lead to satisfaction even though she expressed her determination to learn: “Since it was a compulsory course, I had to take it. I also had a high expectation and wanted to learn a lot by taking the course.” Nevertheless, her confession that she would not willingly take a CBI course for some time revealed how stressful it was for her to take such a strong form of CBI. What Interviewee 1 addressed and complained of implied that L2 learners should pass a threshold level if they can take advantage of CBI (Cummins, 2000) and indicates that the threshold level for a college level CBI course must be higher than intermediate-low, which seemed consistent with what A. Kang (2010) suggested: the threshold level for a college level CBI course be intermediate-mid based on her study of Korean EFL adult learners.

5. CONCLUSION

The current study was an attempt to investigate the types of critical factors to be addressed and considered in order to increase output opportunities for college level L2 learners in a CBI course. For adult learners to take advantage of CBI effects to a fuller degree, it was suggested that they should be given deliberate opportunities to use the target language in a productive speaking mode as well. While CBI has been highly appreciated making the L2 learners competent enough in their receptive skills of listening and reading, it was pointed out that it was weak at producing fluent speakers, largely due to the lack of output opportunities in the CBI classroom (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Based on the data-analyses, the study intended to offer suggestions for assisting college L2 learners in participating productively in speaking in the CBI courses so that they can attain the required expressive skills for their current studies and future careers. The study suggests
that four types of scaffolding should be available if a CBI course is to induce the course-takers’ participation in a spontaneous speaking mode.

5.1. Clear Guidelines for Comprehension and Participation

Having reflected on how they should have been supported by the instructor in order to effectively participate in the CBI course, the participants offered suggestions for maximizing their CBI experience. First, they wished that they had been given clearer guidelines to help them understand the lecture and participate in the classroom discussion as the interviewees complained about the lack of such guidelines. Since the students were mainly freshmen and had never experienced a college-level content course offered under a strong form of CBI before, the lack of clear guidelines and study points seemed to negatively affect their motivation and made it harder for them to experience success in the course.

Especially those whose listening comprehension skills were not competent enough might find the course too challenging, such that they did not want to take another CBI course as Interviewee 1 mentioned that she would not take a CBI course for some time. What the participants asked appeared to resonate with Cummins and Man (2007) arguing that “to develop proficiency in academic English, students needs systematic scaffolding and instruction to deal with longer texts, structurally more complex sentences, more subject-specific new vocabulary” (p. 807). As the participants suggested, if they had read the chapters as homework being guided by focal questions, they would not have to suffer trying to discern the academic contents on their own. That is, scaffolding devices through which they can anticipate what would happen in the flow of the lecture and the types of questions they are expected to answer would be prepared by the instructor.

5.2. Tasks Appropriate for Cognitive and Linguistic Level

While the individual presentations provided by the students actively invited participation, the lecture given by the instructor did not. As the participants mentioned, they could not dare to ask a question or answer to the instructor since it was hard for them to comprehend the contents. Especially as the participants of the current study were all female learners who were generally observed to be more sensitive to the social environment and tried to offer more accurate answer compared to male learners in classroom contexts (Oxford, 1995), how well they were able to comprehend the course contents seemed to be one of the major factors affecting the level of participation. The fact that their participation mainly occurred at the end of the individual presentations would indicate the value of such a task whose contents were constructed by the students, thus mostly consisting of comprehensible
input. Once they understood the contents, it was found to help reduce the anxiety levels caused by a lack of comprehension.

Therefore, it suggested that CBI instructors need to design courses with certain tasks for which learners do not experience a heavy cognitive load required for comprehending the contents, while remembering that “the use of simplified tasks as an ongoing strategy can lead to a reductionist curriculum. Instead, we should consider the nature of the scaffolding that is being provided for learners to carry out” (Gibbons, 2007, p. 703). In this study, the individual presentation task happened to serve two functions while maintaining a level of cognitive demand which was not too high or too simple for this group of college L2 learners: (1) it allowed them to experience prepared output opportunities as presenters; (2) it induced voluntary and spontaneous output performance. For these reasons, the study suggests that a CBI course should include a few tasks such as individual presentation through which they can practice expressive skills if this can compensate for the weaknesses pointed out by the observation of the immersion programs (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

5.3. Rapport with Classmates

Another factor which helped the participants in their endeavor to thrive and succeed in the course was the support from their classmates as described above. Interviewee 6 asserted that, to take the course effectively, she should be able to get along with the classmates. While they tried to make individual efforts to understand the course contents, it seemed critical for them to obtain help from other classmates to compensate for what they could not comprehend on their own as Interviewee 3 mentioned. For them to be able to rely on as well as help each other, a support system needs to be organized as a part of the classroom culture.

The findings suggest that once they find their classmates friendly and sufficiently acquainted, they were able to free themselves from worries about relationships with others, and did not fear for estrangement from their classmates, thus reducing their anxiety levels.

While efforts to make the contents comprehensible enough can be considered a component of the scaffolding to reduce cognitive load, it would help reduce emotional stress if psychological scaffolding is provided by fostering an encouraging classroom atmosphere. Since scaffolding involves “not simply ‘help to do’ but ‘help to know how to do’, and while originally applied only to teacher-student interaction, it is also now seen as applying to certain forms of student-student interaction” (Gibbons, 2007, p. 703), the rapport that the participants were trying to establish with their classmates seemed to constitute a typical form of scaffolding. What Gibbons (2007) noted seems to support Lightbown and Spada (2013), who asserted that “traditionally, the ZPD has been understood to involve an expert and a novice. However, recent work has broadened the term to include novice-novice or
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learner-learner interaction” (p. 119).

These findings also imply that spontaneous oral communication can happen more with equal footing counterparts rather than with superiors in terms of language skills and authority. Such a tendency was partly proven by Lee and Lee (2011) whose study examined “the effects of pairing based on English proficiency and gender on high school students’ speaking performance” (p. 237). The study suggested that intermediate-level students participated more actively in performing tasks when paired with students of same level compared than when they had to carry out tasks with those of higher levels. It also showed that the lower-level students were more affected by other factors than language proficiency itself. Whether they were assisted with scaffolding was one such factor.

5.4. Instructional Aids for Encouraging Participation

For the learners to be encouraged to speak out in the classroom, this study suggests that one more point should be considered in addition to the aforementioned elements and conditions. The instructor needs to be keenly aware of contribution and function of classroom materials such as the video-clip used in the CBI course in this study, which appeared to effectively inspire participation. While the video-clip seemed to induce participation, however, the instructor regretfully did not bring another tool exhibiting similar effects. In particular, at the end of semester when the impact of the video-clip seemed to fade, such an inspirational tool should have been introduced again, as it could have renewed their willingness to participate.

Since their participation tended to increase immediately after presenting the video-clip and decreased over as its effect apparently waned, instructor should remember the influence of instructional aids for inspiration, and prepare such aids which should be “up-to-date, appropriate for adult learners, culturally sensitive” (Nunan, 2007, p. 433) to keep the learners motivated to speak out. Instructional aids such as the video-clip seem to meet Nunan’s conditions and play a role in encouraging the L2 learners to participate as it obviously stimulated their speaking, and can be said to serve as scaffolding.

In conclusion, the study suggests that in addition to top-down techniques from instructors such as providing preview homework and focus questions in advance, the horizontal support system created by classmates is necessary to empower participants in CBI classrooms. The support provided for and by the course takers can be considered as a form of scaffolding which is “explicitly linked to the ZPD concept” (e.g., Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 274; Rogoff & Wertsch, 1984) since, due to their classmates’ help, they were able to increase their comprehension of the contents and better prepare for exams. That is, the support from the classmates allowed the participants to achieve what they could not do otherwise, reflecting the fact that learning is “seen as occurring between
individuals, not within them” and validating the argument of “the sociocognitive psychological frame developed out the work of Vygotsky (Gibbons, 2007, p. 703). As Echevarria et al. (2004) mentioned that quality CBI must look like any other quality lessons, it should be understood that the effective features found in any good lesson need to be implemented in CBI as well. That is, clear guidelines for comprehension and participation, tasks appropriate for the learners’ cognitive and linguistic level, an emotional environment constructed by rapport among classmates, and instructional aids to increase motivation and willingness to participate will be even more necessary if CBI is to be sufficiently effective.

5.5. Limitations of the Study

If the current study had involved observation of several CBI classrooms, then its findings could be strengthened regarding how critically the guidelines for participation, the effects of certain tasks, emotional relationship among classmates, and the instructional aids affecting participation levels. While the current study was conducted in a qualitative way through observation of the classroom, focusing on the target behavior, hearing directly from the participants and intensively focusing on one CBI classroom, involving more classes could have provided a fuller picture of what transpires in CBI courses. Further studies of CBI with additional data collection methods such as survey data from questionnaires and video-taping for self-observation by the participants would be expected that the findings of the current study could be confirmed with statistical analyses.

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### APPENDIX

**Interview Questions**

1. How well did you understand the content?
2. How (well) did you prepare for the classes?
3. What’s the hardest part of taking the course?
4. What made you stick to the course?
5. What kind of help do you think you need in order to take the course in a most successful way?
6. How did you get help when needed?
7. Did you participate well? In what way? If not, why not? In what way?
8. Before and after the course, did you see any changes happening to you as an English language learner/user?

Applicable levels: Tertiary

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