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Negotiated Interaction, Transfer, and the Second Language Classroom

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Ever since Krashen's first mention of the input hypothesis (1977), a great deal of theoretical and research effort has been put into clarifying and expanding this concept. One of the limitations of the hypothesis that has been identified is its assumption that comprehensible input and a favorable affective environment alone are sufficient preconditions for acquisition to take place.

Negotiated Interaction

Subsequent research (Pica, 1988, 1991) has shown that in addition to comprehensible input and a low affective filter, negotiated interaction is also a crucial element in the acquisition process. As Pica (1988) has stated, "comprehensible input is not sufficient for successful second-language acquisition, but . . . opportunities for the NNS (non-native speaker) to achieve more target-like output are also necessary" (p. 45). It is through negotiated interaction that this "more target-like output" can be achieved. The need to negotiate meaning brings into play modifications in the interlocutors' speech. Such modifications include repetition, synonymy, and paraphrase, and reductions in sentence length and syntactic complexity (Pica, 1991). Research has shown that all of these tend to facilitate comprehension, the necessary precondition for the input hypothesis to work. During the negotiation process,

> a listener signals that the meaning of the speaker's input is not clear either through requests for confirmation or clarification of the speaker's message or in response to the speaker's checks on message comprehensibility. The speaker and listener then try to modify and repair this input so that it can be understood (Pica, 1991, pp. 437-438).

This interactive procedure not only leads to increased comprehension but also to increased acquisition.

Pica (1988, 1991) and Pica, Young, and Doughty (1987) bring research evidence which demonstrates that "NS (native speaker) signals of incomprehension were successfully negotiated with NNSs, (and) played a role . . . in getting the NNSs to modify their interlanguage toward comprehensible and target-like production" (p. 68). Apparently, negotiated interaction provided the NNSs with models of what their comprehensible output could sound like. Comprehensible output, as Swain (1985)

has argued, is also necessary for second language acquisition to occur. The negotiation of meaning, being a dialogue, implies that learners are both receiving comprehensible input and producing comprehensible output in a more target-like form, thereby achieving all the preconditions for acquisition to take place. These observations provide additional support to claims by Krashen (1985) and Long (1985) that comprehensible input from the NS is the main contributor to NNS output.

An important factor in negotiated interaction is redundancy. This redundancy or repetition and restatement is perhaps the major catalyst in the interlocutors' achieving mutual comprehension. Other important factors which have been identified are linguistic modifications of content words and the timing of the delivery (Pica, 1991). It has also been recognized that negotiated interaction involves far more than what is found in usual classroom interaction, that is the exchange of general solicits and their responses. Rather negotiated interaction implies "a mutual activity geared toward signalling needs to understand unclear input, checking on input comprehension, and adjusting interaction toward mutual comprehension" (Pica, 1991, p. 447).

Transfer

The examples we will be seeing of negotiated interaction all also contain examples of first language (L1) transfer. Transfer, as defined by Faerch and Kasper (1987) is "an IL (interlanguage) plan containing an L1 subplan" (p. 115). That is to say that it is a plan for expression using interlanguage knowledge which includes an element or elements inspired by L1 knowledge. According to Ringbom (1983), transfer can take on two forms.

> One is when semantic features are taken over, i.e., the semantic range of a target language word is modified on the model of an equivalent source language word, which in some contexts can be used as an equivalent. The other is when translation equivalence is assumed between source language and target language, so that existing lexical items in the target language are combined into compounds or phrases analogical with the source language. (p. 207)

The first of these procedures is termed borrowing. It is when an L1 word is foreignized (modified according to second language [L2] phonological or morphological principles) or simply imported without modification to the IL plan. The second case, termed lexical transfer, is when L1 term or expression and its L2 translation equivalent are, often erroneously, assumed to share the same semantic range of meaning. Borrowing is usually based on cognate-pairing (Carroll, 1992), a process of correctly or incorrectly identifying L1 and L2 words of similar morphophonological shape as meaning exactly the same thing.

Lexical transfer is an important communication strategy used by L2 learners to cope when faced with ignorance of the necessary lexicon to achieve their communicative intent. Reliance on L1 knowledge can often lead to a guess which communicates, although of course not always. It is however, a useful tool which often reveals great creativity on the part of the speaker/writer. L1 transfer was the focus of the larger study from which the examples we will be seeing were taken.

Examples of Negotiated Interaction

Now let us turn to some cases of negotiated interaction. These examples involve both NS-NNS and NNS-NNS interactions. The principal subjects are all young, intermediate level and recently arrived Hispanic (Dominican or Puerto Rican) learners of English as a second language studying at language institutes in New York. Interlocutors are of the same background as the principal subjects, except for differences in first language. In the transcriptions, the letter in brackets indicates the native language of the interlocutor (S = Spanish, R = Romance, E = English, J - Japanese). The symbols like S01 represent principal subjects and S01-2 indicates an interlocutor. Words written in brackets, e.g., [arlequin], are words actually uttered in Spanish. Words written between slashes, e.g., /stIp/, are phonetic transcriptions of words which were neither English or Spanish.

The negotiated interaction of subjects and interlocutors at times led to development in the subjects' IL lexicon. At times, it did not. Often, aspects of these examples reflected L1 transfer. This section will begin with an extended example of negotiated interaction which includes excerpts from all four conversations/tasks subject S04 was engaged in. These illustrate a number of the processes which will be looked at in more detail later in this section.

1) An example of Development of a Lexical Form Through Conversational Interaction

1A) S04: Okay, in my, in my picture he's wearing a, a, I don't know . . . how to explain. /es/, no, no white shirt, he's wearing a, like a /stæn/ a **/list/** shirt.

S04-1: Shirt?

S04: Yeah, **/lis/**, **/lis/**. [R]

In his first attempt to refer to a striped shirt, S04 admitted quite frankly that he didn't know the term. His first strategy was to describe physical attributes by indicating

what it was not, i.e., it was not an all white shirt. He next attempted foreignizing. His first product, /stæn/, has no apparent explanation. His next, however, does. The item /list/ is his foreignized form for *listas* or stripes in Spanish. The L1-Romance interlocutor didn't appear to understand, and the topic was changed. At no later point in this interaction did S04 attempt to refer to stripes.

In the next conversation/task, S04 once more faced the need to communicate the concept of 'stripe'. This time he received the help of his L1-English interlocutor.

1B) S04-2: What, what kind of shirt?

S04: Ah, like a, I don't know wha . . . what to say.

S04-2: **Striped.**

S04: **Stripe**.

S04-2: Yeah. Okay.

S04: Black and white, right?

S04-2: Right. [E]

Again, S04 admitted his ignorance, but now his English-speaking partner could supply the correct item where the romance speaking interlocutor could not. S04 repeated it in its basic form and then verified ("Black and white, right?") that this new term did indeed refer to what he thought it did. Later in the same conversation/task he tried to use his newly acquired lexical item.

1C) S04: Okay, no, she's wearing, ah, ah, **/stIp/, /stIp/** . . .

S04-2: **Striped**

S04: **Striped**, eh, dress. And also she has a, a white belt. [E]

All he could recall was a reduced version of the target word which omitted the 'r' and simplified the vowel sound. The interlocutor refreshed his memory, and S04 produced an appropriate version of the target, including the past participle suffix.

In his next conversation/task, he once again had occasion to use his new term.

1D) S04: And . . . one of them is wearing a, a **striped** shoes.
You know?

S04-3: Stripe? Yes. [J]

Perhaps recalling the problems he had with the term, S04 checked to be sure his L1-Japanese interlocutor was familiar with the item and found that he was.

In the last conversation/task, the need arose again.

1E) S04: And a **stripe**, eh, shirt.

S04-4: Uhm. Yes.

S04: Right. Okay. Behind . . . him there two, two persons . . . [S]

S04 has returned to a simplified version of the item. His interlocutor's response did not suggest strong understanding of the item; it was more of a polite 'yes'. S04 quickly changed the subject. Yet, later in the conversation/task he needed the item again.

1F) S04: Ah, **stripe** shirt. You know what I mean?

S04-4: A **/stray/** . . .

S04: And also he, he has . . .

S04-4: A **/stip/**, a **/strip/**.

S04: **Stripe**. A **stripe, [arlequín]**.

S04: Ah, yes, we say . . .

S04: And also . . .

S04-4: <says a word in Catalán>

S04: <laughs> I didn't know you used this word. [S]

Since S04 had acquired the item in its basic form at least, he took on a teaching role. S04-4, an L1-Catalán/Spanish speaker, had the same problems as S04 controlling aspects of the item's pronunciation, i.e., the 'r' and the vowel sound. S04 repeated the pronunciation for him and also gave a translation, *arlequín* or harlequin. The subject was alluding to the clown's striped or diamond-figured costume or possibly to striped Neapolitan ice cream. S04-4 understood this term and gave the Catalán equivalent.

In the data from the conversation/tasks there were numerous examples of correct learning, wrong learning and even no learning. An example of each of these will be presented here.

2) An Example of Correct Learning Through Interaction

S01: The woman who's in front has a, a /bot/ in his foot, foot, a **/bot/**, ah, ah, big shoes, you know, like the, the like use the, the, you know the high shoes when you, you go to a camp in a horse . . .

S01-3: Uh huh.

S01: He has a big shoes . . .

S01-3: Oh, **boots**.

S01: **Boots**.

S01-3: **Boots**.

S01: **Boots**, she has **boots**, black **boots**. I think has a line, a black line. Is white with a black lines, the **boots**. [E]

After attempting a foreignized form of the Spanish *botas*, S01 tried a number of strategies to communicate the target concept. He went to the superordinate 'shoes'; described physical attributes, 'big' and 'high'; and finally described a context of use. It took the L1-English interlocutor a moment to understand, then he supplied the appropriate pronunciation. Almost like a classic audiolingual repetition drill, the partners repeated the form until S01 had it. He even used the form more than necessary in the final utterance presented. All this led to learning as S01 subsequently used the form correctly.

3) An Example of Incorrect Learning Through Interaction

The process of acquisition through negotiated interaction does not always lead to the learning of appropriate forms, as the continuation of S04's conversation with S04-4 illustrates:

3A) S04: Also, also he has a white hair.

S04-4: Yes. But in all the, all the head? Or just in, in the . . .

S04: All, all . . .

S04-4: Ah, my, in my picture he's **/kalb/**?

S04: Eh, I don't know what this . . .

S04-4: **/kalb/**. Yes, **[calvo]**

S04: Yeah, I don't know if he . . .

S04-4: <writing> He is **/kalb/**. Yes.

S04: This is the word?

S04-4: Yes. **/kalb/**.

S04: Okay. [S]

S04-4 foreignized *calvo* to produce /kalb/. S04 wasn't entirely convinced this could be done. Yet S04-4 insisted that it was indeed the word, and S04 appeared to finally acquiesce. Thus, a form constructed on the basis of transfer may have entered the IL lexicon of both of these L1 Spanish speakers.

Let us see another example of the same process:

3B) S01: The man who has the accident. If in his right eyes has a **band**, think is a **band**. You know?

S01-4: Which eyes is **blind**?

S01: Huh?

S01-4: Which eye is **blind**?

S01: Blind?

S01-4: Yes.

S01: What is **blind**?

S01-4: **Blind** is . . .

S01: **Blind**, oh, okay, **blind**.

S01-4: He can't see.

S01: This, uh, man has a, a **blind** in the, uh, right eyes. [J]

In this case, S01 wanted to refer to the patch on the young man's eye. He used the English word, but probably foreignized form 'band' (coming from *venda*, bandage or surgical dressing, a word which is often pronounced *vanda* in Caribbean Spanish). The L1-Japanese interlocutor understood 'blind'. S01 took this to be a correction of the form he head used for 'bandage' and subsequently used the term 'blind' as a noun in its slot. Accepting this form may also reflect transfer as the word *blindaje*, an apparent cognate, refers to armored plating, i.e., a protective covering.

4) An Example of No Learning in Spite of Interaction

S10: And, uh the man have the **/parch/** on his left eyes is smile . . .

S10-4: Well . . . uhhh. Which, which eye is..has he got the **patch** on?

S10: Right.

S10-4: Hum. In my picture he has the **patch** on the left eye.

S10: But it's right, yeah . . . his eye.

S10-1: On that eye? <gesturing>

S10: Yes.

S10-4: But not in my picture. He's got it on this eye.
<gesturing>

S10: Oh, I see.

S10-4: No, in my picture he's got it on this eye. So,
so that's a difference, right?

S10: Yeah.

S10-4: Okay, let's see. **Patch** <writes>. So you've got your
patch on the left eye, right? [E]

S10 used the foreignized form /parch/ from *parcho*. His L1-English interlocutor seemed to be attempting to help him correct this as he repeated 'patch' four times. This correction was unobtrusively integrated into his comments. That is, the correct

form was clearly presented in the ensuing input S10 received. Yet a little later in the interaction, he produced:

S10: Of, of the man have the **/parch/**..? [E]

In spite of hearing and understanding the correct form in input, S10 did not modify his original choice. Perhaps practice at the moment the corrected form was presented would have drawn S10's attention to the difference between his solution and the appropriate form and, thus, input would have become intake and produced learning.

We have seen in examples 1A-1F and 2 where negotiated interaction led to learning and L2 acquisition. In examples 3A and 3B, however, the interaction led to incorrect learning. Example 4 resulted in no learning at all. Where the learning was correct the interlocutor was a NS of English. In the cases where the learning was incorrect the interlocutors had other first languages. In the example of no learning the NS of English tried to teach the correct form to the principal subject, but he did not pick up on it. These results, although based on a very small sample, put somewhat in question the value of negotiated interaction between NNSs of the same level, a common practice in ESL classrooms. Perhaps if there had been a marked difference in proficiency level between interlocutors, the more advanced NNS learner could have helped the less advanced.

Where we have seen examples of lexical transfer in these transcriptions, they have all been cases of borrowing. The creation of words like *list, bot, kalb,* and *band* in an attempt to approximate English, produced cases in which it was assumed incorrectly that a cognate-pair existed between Spanish and English. Although not part of the English lexicon, these words attest to learner creativity when trying to overcome lexical ignorance.

Negotiated Interaction and Transfer in the Second Language Classroom

Negotiated Interaction in the ESL Classroom

How can we incorporate negotiated interaction into the ESL classroom? We should begin by recalling Goldstein and Conrad's (1990) admonition that we cannot expect learners to use negotiated interaction without understanding the purposes of such an approach. In addition to the purposes of negotiated interaction, learners should understand the rules of speaking associated with the process as well as the respective roles of participants. This is to say that learners must be taught to use negotiated interaction.

One approach to the teaching of negotiated interaction would be for the teacher to model it in her everyday classroom speech. If teachers are constantly questioning meaning and seeking clarification, they will set an example which learners will follow in their approach to classroom discourse. Another approach would be to actively compare and contrast the discourse of negotiated interaction with that of usual classroom interaction. The teacher could present students either with written or taped transcripts of both kinds of discourse. Learners could discuss the two styles and establish comparisons and contrasts. Students could create rules for speaking and define the roles of participants in each mode to make the comparison more graphic (Goldstein & Conrad, 1990). It would be pointed out to learners that the negotiated interaction mode is the desired mode for this particular classroom.

As Pica, Young and Doughty (1987) have affirmed,

> it should no longer be the teacher's sole prerogative to ask questions; the scope and purpose of questions should extend beyond mere student display and teacher evaluation. All participants in classroom interaction should ask questions, and those questions should serve to clarify and confirm input, thereby making it comprehensible. (p. 754)

Any approach to second language teaching/learning which brings about change in the traditional role of teacher and student so that students take on more initiative and responsibility for learning is bound to increase classroom interaction, which in turn will increase comprehension of input and lead to more target-like speech. This naturalistic interaction should be the goal. It has been demonstrated through research, for example that input artificially modified in advance, in the form of carefully graded syllabuses and simplified readings and tape recordings is of limited value in increasing comprehension (Pica, Young & Doughty, 1987).

An exercise teachers could give their students would be to simply say difficult-to-understand utterances to different students and then give them the chance to practice questioning and investigating to discover the meaning of what they have heard. This would give students the opportunity to develop skills in uncovering the meaning of statements which contain unfamiliar lexical items.

Once students have been introduced to the nature of the discourse typical of negotiated interaction and had the chance to practice it, they can be asked to engage in spontaneous conversations in which they try to negotiate meaning. When necessary students would ask appropriate questions or request clarification of what they are hearing. Such conversations would probably be most effective between students of different proficiency levels. More advanced learners are more likely to produce speech requiring negotiation by a less advanced learner than if two students at the same level are conversing.

Finally, students could be asked to write up summaries of the conversations they have engaged in. This would be a way of demonstrating that they have indeed understood what took place in the conversation. They could explain the meanings they discovered for lexical items which they initially did not understand. Such a written record would be concrete proof that negotiation leads to the understand of meaning.

Part of participating in negotiated interaction is being a good listener. Teachers should create exercises which will enable learners to increase their ability as listeners. This could take the form of having students listen to recordings of brief conversational exchanges. The teacher could then quiz students with questions such as "What was the word used after 'finally'?" or "What was the first word in Jane's response to Tom's question?" This would develop students' acuity as listeners.

Goldstein and Conrad (1990) recommend the use of negotiated interaction in writing conferences:

> just as negotiation clarifies meanings in ordinary conversation, negotiated interaction in the (writing) conference may clarify the need for revision and the strategies to undertake the revision. Students, therefore, may understand more clearly what to revise, how to revise, and why the need to revise.

Students can analyze the discourse of conferences and come to appreciate their goals, the roles of participants and the rules of speaking they will employ when they participate in conferences.

Finally, we might point out that not all learners have the same styles of interaction. Some students are very reticent about actively engaging in classroom conversations. Pica (1991) suggests that since negotiation moves are vehicles for repetition, this repetition will be available to all classroom participants who are actively listening. Repetition generated by more verbal members of the class will facilitate comprehension for all members of the class.

The active give and take of negotiated interaction is a necessary element in any classroom. Constant questioning of meaning and requests for clarification can but lead to more target like speech and to greater quantities of comprehensible input available to class members. This in turn, if the input hypothesis is right, will lead to greater second language acquisition by all who are actively or even passively engaged in classroom interaction.

Transfer in the ESL Classroom

In the case where L1 and L2 are similar, work with cognate transfer can also be productive in the ESL classroom. Work can be done to help students recognize

cognates and also to develop the risk taking behavior of trying to create L2 words on the basis of an assumed cognate relationship. Work with cognates is, of course, most feasible when dealing with monolingual classes of English learners. However, if the teacher is working with a class in which three or four different first language groups are represented, he or she can work with cognates with each group individually. The teacher could ask colleagues who speak their students' languages for suggestions of common and/or problematic cognates which could be dealt with in class.

Cognates are not only found among closely related Western languages. Japanese, for example, uses a large number of borrowings from the English language. For instance, we have *booru* (transcribed in Romanji) for "ball," *mootaa* for "motor," and *painuppuru* for "pineapple."

As spoken cognates are often more difficult to recognize than when they are encountered in written form, the teacher could simply read sentences containing cognates to the students, repeat the cognate, and then ask students for its L1 equivalent. Students could also be given lists of the L1 versions of cognates and asked to try to create the correct L2 form.

Teachers can play a kind of game with their students. The teacher can present the class with items from a list of say 10 true cognates. He or she will then ask students to call out their approximations of the pronunciation of the English equivalent. The student who comes the closest gets a point. At the end of the game, the teacher can write the spelling of the English equivalents on the board and use these words for pronunciation practice.

Students must also develop an awareness that not all cognates are true cognates; there are also semi-cognates and false cognates. If we take the case of Spanish, we see that a word like *organización* is a direct cognate of "organization". Both words share the same semantic fields. On the other hand, while *attender* can mean "attend" as in taking care of a person or problem it does not mean "attend" in the sense of being present at an event. This is an example of a semi-cognate. An example of a false cognate would be *actual* in Spanish which means current or contemporary. "Actual" in English means real or true.

One activity which teachers could create would be to write short paragraphs in which the teacher, him or herself, commits the kinds of cognate errors frequently found in the speaking or writing of ESL students. The students' job would be, using their dictionaries, to try to identify as many of the errors as possible and to provide the correct English equivalent of the false or semi-cognates found in the paragraph.

Another useful exercise would be for the teacher to give learners parallel lists of semi-cognates in L1 and L2, exemplifying the major semantic domains the particular word covers in each language. Learners could compare these and make statements

about the range of domains covered in each language. Another exercise would be simply to give students lists of cognates and have them use their dictionaries to determine if each cognate pair represents a true, semi- or false cognate.

Learners can also be taught the equivalent affixes used in both languages. For example the English suffix *-ity* compared to the Spanish *-idad*, or the English prefix *non-* and the Spanish *no-*. Next students should be encouraged to take risks and to try to create L2 words through a process of foreignization, or adapting the L1 base word according to L2 phonological and morphological principles. They should also learn to be sensitive to feedback to determine if their guess worked or not.

Learners could be asked to keep notebooks in which they record true, semi-. and false cognates. Once students' glossaries of cognates have begun to grow, the teacher can request that students choose five true cognates, five semi-cognates, and five false cognates. Students would then use these words to compose an original story. This practice will reinforce the similarities and differences in meanings of cognates which students must master as their second language lexicon develops.

As we can see, both the use of negotiated interaction and work with cognate transfer are useful techniques in the L2 classroom. Negotiated interaction increases comprehension and leads students to more target-like production; cognate transfer provides learners with a rapid way to increase their receptive and productive vocabularies. Both definitely have their place in the ESL classroom.

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