INVESTIGATING TRANSFERABILITY OF INTERACTIONAL COMPETENCE: A CASE STUDY OF EFL STUDENTS AT A CHINESE UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

The purpose of this exploratory study is to investigate the transferability of EFL students' interactional competence (IC). Using conversation analysis, the teacher-researcher examines and then compares how students employ turn-taking, topic management, repair and alignment strategies respectively in their L1 and L2 topical discussions to co-construct communication and develop "confluence". The results of this study are expected to contribute to the particular question of whether, and if so how, the students who are already interactionally competent in their L1 can use transfer from their L1 to help with their L2 interaction.

1 Introduction

In the first year of my teaching on a spoken English language course at a university in China, the main pedagogical goal was to develop students' communicative competence (CC) ─ the language ability which is often viewed to be resided within as well as be able to be assessed in a given individual (Galaczi, 2014; Young, 2013). In order to properly meet my students' needs, I did a course expectation survey with them at the start of the course and what I found with respect to the students' main intrinsic motivation was that they chose this elective course to improve oral fluency and speak more like native speakers of English. The survey result led to a sort of teaching instruction that was very much production-oriented and centered on promoting individual learner's spoken fluency. Accordingly, a variety of learning activities such as practicing tongue twisters, dubbing practice, planned individual speaking on a given topic and group discussion, etc., were designed and applied to target a better pronunciation, higher speed of delivery and automaticity in speech production. As for the assessment of students' learning performance, two tasks were employed in the final test. The first one was an independent speaking task. In this task, students were required to deliver a 2-minute impromptu speech on a topic assigned by the teacher. The second task was done in a group of 4s. Four students had a topical discussion for around 8 minutes. The whole process of students' both doing an independent speaking task and conducting group discussion were video-recorded for the sake of grading. After I reviewed the video-recordings, there was one phenomenon that especially caught my attention. It seemed to me that the students who did fairly well in the independent speaking task were not necessarily able to get themselves fully engaged in group topical discussion. In a "peculiar" case, a student who got a relatively high score in her independent speaking test only managed one long turn throughout the group discussion. She failed to regain the speakership owing to the obvious poor turn-taking strategy. This prompted me to reflect on my own classroom teaching practice and led to a shift of my

pedagogical goal from focusing on learners' solo performance to cultivating their ability to co-construct communication and to achieve "confluence" (McCarthy, 2005), i.e., the act of making spoken language fluent together with another speaker. Gradually, rather than individual learner's ability and command of speaking grammatically correct and fluent discourse, what I concern more now in spoken English teaching is to help develop learners' interactional competence (IC) which apparently differentiates itself from communicative competence (CC) by emphasizing the "jointness" of spoken communication.

The term of IC was actually first introduced by Kramsch in 1986 and not until more recently, has it become a research hotspot in the field of Conversation Analysis (CA) and Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Among those previous endeavors to conceptualizing IC, the 3 contributors to further our understanding of IC's construct are Young (2008, 2011), Markee (2008) and Dings (2007, 2014). Young (2008) stresses the importance of co-construction of interactionists and proposes that on top of identity and linguistic resources, to manage and keep the conversation going entails a knowledge of interactional resources such as turn-taking and repair. Again, in Young (2011, p.430), he points out that "the most fundamental difference between interactional competence and communicative competence is that IC is not "what a person knows, it is what a person does together with others." Unlike Young and other scholars who have investigated IC initially mainly from an L1 perspective, Markee focus his attention on L2 IC and explores it from a CA-for-SLA perspective by referring to basic concepts of conversation analysis, such as turn-taking, co-construction, repair and intersubjectivity (Barraja-Rohan, 2013). IC, in Markee's words, requires learners' "co-constructing with their interlocutors locally enacted, progressively more accurate, fluent, and complex interactional repertoires in the L2" (Markee, 2008, p. 3). With respect to the development of L2 IC, the most extensive study up to date, according to Young (2011) is Dings (2007). Expanding on Young's model of IC, Dings' study includes alignment activity as another important grouping of interactional resources and has contributed to the operationalization of the concept of IC. (2007, 2014, p. 742).

Based on the Young (2008, 2011, 2013) and Dings (2007, 2014) model of IC, this exploratory study will look at the features of turn-taking, repair and alignment activity respectively in students'L1 and L2 interaction with an expectation to make contribution to a largely under-investigated area in CA-for-SLA. More specifically, it tries to provide the answer to the particular question of whether, and if so how, the students who are already interactionally competent in their L1 can use transfer from their L1 to help with their L2 interactions.

2 Literature review

2.1 Turn-taking and topic management

One of the main resources that participants who are engaged in a conversation employ to co-construct successful interaction is turn-taking practice (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974). It provides for "the orderly distribution of opportunities to participate in talk-in-interaction" (Raymond & Sidnell 2014, p.251) and hence is the solution to fix the coordination problem which could occur in a two-party conversation and which can become even more notable in multi-party interactions (Heritage, 2008). So learning how to engage and manage the turn-taking is a manifestation of second language learners' interactional competence (Wong &Waring 2010, Young 2008).

The two components of tur-taking system are turn constructional unit (TCU) and allocation of turns. Projecting TCUs is crucial for speaker change and has an impact on the natural flow of conversation. "It is an area where novice L2 speakers may run into difficulty, particularly when they are at a beginning or lower intermediate level" (Barraja-Rohan 2013, p.11). The second component, allocation of turns, basically means the methods speakers use to effect transition to a next speaker (Raymond & Sidnell 2014). During a conversation, not knowing how to bring others into a conversation can lead to awkward moments (Wong & Waring 2010, p. 46) and even cause break-down of the whole interaction.

Another important resource interactants bring to interactive practice is topic management which is looked at alongside turn-taking in the present study. Turn-taking and topic development are closely linked to each other in the sense that topic management certainly involves turn-taking. For example, the action of yielding a turn to another person may lead to another person's initiating a new topic. The key component of topic management is topic-shifting. According to some CA research (e.g. Sacks, 1992; Jefferson, 1984 cited in Seedhouse & Harris 2011, p.75), there are two different types of topic shifts. The first one is what would be counted as good practice in conversation, that is, "stepwise" topic shift. In conversation, probably the best way for topic transition is let topics flow "into" one another without obvious, detached and marked boundaries. When explicit makers are used frequently to shift the topic, the conversation seems to be problematic and probably is of poor quality. This type is called "disjunctive" (Jefferson, 1984), "marked" (Sacks, 1992) or boundaried topic shift (Seedhouse & Harris 2011, p.75).

In Seedhouse & Harris' (2011) study, they respectively investigated topic development by candidates with a high score, a mid-range score and a low score in the IELTS Speaking Test. According to Seedhouse & Harris (2011), candidates at the higher end of scoring scale tend to have more instances of extended turns in which topic is developed and they engage more with the topic, develop the topic more coherently. Similarly, in Galaczi's (2014) study, she also looked at the features of topic development of candidates at different proficiency level. One of her findings suggests that the most salient topic development characteristic of candidates at a lower lever proficiency is short-lived topic and abrupt topic shift.

2.2 Repair and intersubjectivity

The resource by which participants utilize to deal with interactional trouble was first identified and termed as the organization of repair (Schegloff et al. 1977). In social interaction, repair is vital to keep conversation on the right "track" and to help interactants achieve intersubjectivity. According to Schegloff (1992, p.1341), what can be repairable ranges from "inability to access a word when needed or to articulate it properly, to transient problems in hearing to variously based problems of understanding". In other words, repair should include practices aimed at fixing breakdowns of intersubjectivity or any trouble which could affect overall flow of interaction and construction of intersubjective understanding of people who partake in conversation. Just as Scarcella states "the ability to carry out self-repair and to elicit repair form one's conversational partner is an essential skill for a second or foreign language learner" (1988, p.76 cited in Wong & Waring, 2010). Repair is an "integral component" of interactional competence (Wong & Waring 2010, p. 248).

Among four possible repair trajectories identified in Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks' (1977) model, they found that there was a general preference for self-initiated self-repair. However, it seems the preference for repair trajectory varies when related to L2 speakers' language proficiency level. In Yasui's (2010) study, the findings show that due to the limitation in language competence, the beginning learner of Japanese explicitly shows his preference for other repair and invites other's help whereas the advanced learner's language proficiency is fully displayed through his preference for self-repair.

2.3 Alignment and co-construction of confluence

The term "co-construction" was first introduced by Jacoby and Ochs (1995). They define it as "the joint creation of a form, interpretation, stance, action, activity, identity, institution, skill, ideology, emotion, or other culturally meaningful reality" (Jacoby and Ochs 1995, p.171). The implication of this definition relating to talk-in-interaction is, in order to make fluent and consistent interaction "happen", every interactant shares a distributed responsibility and has common obligation to contribute to the "dynamics" of interaction. This co-constructive nature of interaction, thereby, necessitates efforts of "collaborating, cooperating and coordinating" on the part of all participants in the interaction (Dings, 2007). In Clancy & McCarthy (2015), co-construction focus on what a second speaker does across the turn-boundaries to collaborate with a previous speaker. With rich example of co-constructed utterance, they also questioned the traditional definition on "fluency" concerning second language learning and advocate "confluence", the notion which was first offered by McCarthy (2005). This notion highlights the fact that conversation is interactively and jointly constructed by all participants and hence, what matters is not whether a single speaker can produce smooth performance but whether the conversation as a whole is flowing smoothly or not (Clancy & McCarthy 2015, p.449). Therefore, collective meaning–making and the ways how speakers attend to each other's contributions and make sense of each other deserve more attention rather than individual performances (Walsh 2013). In Dings (2014) she argues that L2 learners with poorly developed interactional resources can undertake little responsibility in co-constructing conversation and the microskills that allow interactants to participate in conversation were overlooked by previous models of L2 competence. Based on Young's IC model (2008, 2011), she proposes the inclusion of alignment activity as another important grouping of interactional resources. According to Dings (2014, p.744), "alignment refers to the ways in which interlocutors demonstrate their intersubjectivity, by showing each other that they are understanding each other and are being understood", so the alignment moves interactants take are actually indication of shared understanding among them. Dings' study reveals that L2 learner's progressive changes of participation in alignment activity indeed provide evidence for greater contribution to the co-construction of communication.

The three alignment activities identified and analyzed in Dings' (2007, p.26; 2014, p.744) are "(1) assessment activity which refers to the ways speakers evaluate the content of their own and their interlocutors' contributions to the conversation; (2) collaborative completions, moves in which an interactant completes another interactant's utterance; and (3) collaborative contributions which are moves that bring harmony with the previous speakers' move by either rephrasing the previous turn or add more information."

In the present study, Dings categorization of alignment will be applied so as to uncover the process of how L2 learners co-construct meaning in their topical talk and how confluence is achieved in this process.

2.4 L1/L2 interactional competence and the transferability

Interactional competence (IC), as an important component of means for people to achieve shared understanding and to communicate effectively, has been considered to be crucial competence to develop both in L1 educational setting and in L2 learning for the reason that it is a must-have competence for students to join both in social interaction and their work-life in the near future. From the past literature, it can be seen that IC has been studied in a variety of professional and institutional settings. The focus of this study is on whether L2 speakers can transfer their already-acquired L1 interactional competence to help with their L2 interaction and this will be examined from a conversation analysis (CA) perspective.

Compared with other studies on linguistic transfer and pragmatic transfer, no study yet has been dedicated to the transfer study on L1 and L2 interactional competence. However, some publication has indeed referred to this although the main focus of which is obviously not on transfer.

In Markee's (2008) paper, he states that the concept of IC can not only independently focus on but also broadens key issues in mainstream SLA and this includes whether, and if so how, participant use transfer from the L1 to the L2 as they deploy turn taking, repair and sequential practices (p.406). One positive example of L1's interactional competence helps with learners' interaction in L2 can be found in Carroll (2004, 2005). His papers which demonstrates that a group of Japanese L2 speakers of English with low English linguistic competence still succeed in performing complex interactional actions (cited in Barraja-Rohan 2013). Carroll attributes this to L2 learner's L1 interactional competence. What Carroll also observed was that those novice L2 speakers were able to accomplish their turns with such a precision as to produce a smooth transition with no gap and he claims that "this practice is most likely "transferable" from whatever competences constitute membership in their primary language/culture (Carroll 2005, p.160, cited in Barraja-Rohan 2013, p.22). In Huth's (2013) study, it demonstrates that L2 learners overwhelmingly transfer their interactional competence relating to the sequential organization from their L1 into their L2 talk. Despite these examples showing L2 learners' ability to transfer their relevant L1 interactional competence, this "transferability" cannot be taken for granted.

In Barraja-Rohan's (2011) study, she argues that although when adult speakers engage in L2 interaction, they rely to some extent on their L1 interactional competence, however, interactional transfer from L1 to L2 were not necessarily automatic (p.487). This was evidenced in an example displaying a L2 speaker's failure in transferring his L1's response token to L2 conversation which resulted in breakdown of intersubjectivity. L2 students are too, surprised at their lack of transfer onto L2. Then, Barraja-Rohan (2011) suggests that teachers should make students more aware of interactional resources and there is a need to explicitly "teach" interactional competence in L2 classroom.

In another study conducted by the same researcher, Barraja-Rohan (2013), evidence has been found that some L2 participants draw from their L1interactional competence when interacting

in L2. One of the examples is that a Japanese L2 learner successfully incorporates a Japanese response token hai in sequentially relevant contexts without affecting intersubjectivity (p.34). Based on the evidence in both of her studies, Barraja-Rohan (2013) suggests the question to what extent the novice L2 speaker transfers his/her knowledge of L1interactional competence onto L2 remains.

The present study was actually motivated by both Markee (2008) and Barraja-Rohan (2011, 2013) and the overall aim is to contribute to the particular research question of whether, and if so how, the students who are already interactionally competent in their L1 can use transfer from their L1 to help with their L2 interaction. More specifically, this exploratory study attempts to answer the following questions:

(i)   What are the characteristics of turn-taking and topic management in students' L2 and L1 interaction?
(ii) What are the characteristics of repair in students' L2 and L1 interaction?
(iii) What are the characteristics of alignment in students' L2 and L1 interaction?
(iv) To what extent L2 speakers transfer their knowledge of L1 interactional competence onto L2 interactional competence?

3 The study

3.1 Participants and data collection

Participants for this study were chosen on a voluntary basis in the first place. The teacher-researcher told the students that she wanted to record two episodes of their "chat" both in L1 and L2 with the aim of finding differences and similarities so that the teacher may find better methods to help to improve their ability in partaking L2 interaction. Many students showed their enthusiasm as well as curiosity. As this is only a case study, 8 students were selected. They are all Chinese college students from the courses the teacher-researcher teaches. They all have good track records of active participation in the class activities and group discussion. In this sense, they don't seem to have introverted personality which is assumed to have quite an impact on the degree of interactivity. Among them, four students are from Level 1 College English class with a lower language proficiency whereas another 4 are of higher language proficiency and are from Level 2 College English class. In this paper, only Level 1 students' interactional features will be discussed due to the space.

Before the recording, the teacher-researcher asked the students to suggest a topic to have a "chat". The aim of doing this is because what she wants to capture is an "ordinary conversation" rather than classroom group interaction. For classroom interaction, the topic is always assigned to the students by the teacher with certain pedagogical goal. Students don't just have that conversation for the conversation's sake but normally need to get a task done through group communication. Secondly, the "chat" was arranged after class hour and their conversation was recorded in a small, cozy room without others present except that a camera on a tripod was recording the whole process of their "chat". In this sense, the conversation recorded would hopefully resemble the mundane conversation in their daily life to a greater extent.

After a very quick discussion, students proposed to talk about celebrities in English and films in Chinese. Celebrities and films are actually kind of common topics in social media and people's daily conversation. The reason that students decided to talk about celebrities in English and films in Chinese was because they believed that it would be much easier to talk about people in English, however, when it came to film, especially the synopsis, more vocabulary were going to be needed. So they opted to talk about films in their native language, Chinese.

Different from classroom interaction, there were almost no "requirements" from the teacher at all. The teacher-researcher only told them to have a chat for 5-8 minutes around the "umbrella" topic they decided and just feel free to talk. After the recording was finished, when asked if the conversation was very much like the ones they had in their daily life, they said it was alike to a large extent but the difference was that there was a camera so still felt a bit pressure because "you felt it a bit like duty to converse and at least you need to say something whether you know about it or not" (from one of the participant). Apart from that, they gave very positive feedback regarding their conversation saying that "it was fun especially you chat in English first then you switch to Chinese and that really gave you a different "mood" and a quite "relief" (from one of the participant). So, based on students' feedback, the conversation is a rather "genuine" one and this could probably to some extent reveal a "true picture" of their co-constructed interactional competence.

3.2 Data analysis

One of the key methodological approaches to the study of verbal interaction is conversation analysis (CA) (Wooffitt, 2005). It is about applying ethnomethodological principles to naturally occurring talk with the aim of characterizing the organization of the interaction and tracing the development of intersubjectivity in an action sequence (Seedhouse, 2004). The well-equipped ability to unfold interaction on a turn-by-turn basis of CA and its emic perspective provides an effective way to explore how competence is co-constructed by the interactants involved in conversation (Seedhouse, 2011). So, in this study, CA, as a microanalytic approach, is the only tool applied to investigate students' interactional competence manifested respectively in their L1 & L2 topical talk.

Firstly, students' recorded communication in L1 (Chinese) and L2 (English) were carefully transcribed using CA transcription convention in Seedhouse (2004). Secondly, the routine CA analytic steps proposed by Schegloff were followed to systematically work through the data: 1) Check the episode carefully in terms of turn-taking 2) Look for adjacency-pair based sequences and topic management sequencing practice, especially topic-shifting in the episode 3) Note any phenomena of repair. The last step of data analysis is to compare the features of students' L1 and L2 topical talk emerged from analysis of transcription to explore the similarities and differences in interactional practice relating to turn-taking, topic management with special attention to topic shifting, repair and alignment activity.

4 Findings

4.1 Turn-taking and topic management in L2 interaction

At the first glance of the transcript of students' L2 interaction, conversational turns seem to be quite evenly distributed among the four students for nobody holds turn for too long and speakership change quickly and constantly. One of the reasons for these equal-powered conversational exchanges can be attributed to students' very similar linguistic competence. Therefore, no "principle interlocutor" appears within the group. Based on the topic development, the 7- minute conversation can be divided into two episodes. The first episode of conversation can generally be characterized by students' self-initiated turn taking; persistence on self-initiated topics, low mutuality between interactants and abrupt subtopic shifts.

Excerpt 1

    01 S1: for the topic I don't have a mm:: the star which I most like (1.0)
    02   [like most]
    03 S2: [Let's] talk about Wen Zhang
    04 S3: mm::((shakes head))
    05 S1: I feel?e::r
    06 S2: e:r he always(.) he has always been been been thought
    07   as as the best man in China but now (.) now we (2.0) ((struggles with
    08   the word)).hh
    09 S3: I(.) I(.) I(.) have nothing about him except a tele play named 雪
    10   豹((Snow Leopard))=
    11 S2:=↓yeah (1.0) and::=
    12 S4: = I don't know about him.
    13 S2: 不二神探((Badges of Fury)) ((turns to S3))have you seen?
    14 S3: ((shakes head))

From this excerpt, we can see the conversational turns are mainly self-selected by using transitional overlap as in line 3, and turn-entry device as in line 6, 11. Everybody has at least one turn and S2 took the most turns. But, if we look at line 5 and line 6, line 7 and line 9, line 10, line 11 and line 13, we can find low mutuality between these lines. In line 5, student 1 is having trouble continuing. Instead of giving any encouragement by using discourse marker like 'Ok'? 'Yes'? S2 takes advantage and retains his speakership as evidenced in line 6. However, S2 also encounters the same problem of lacking vocabulary and his breath-in signals his difficulty in carrying on in line 8. This gives chance to S3. He self-selects the turn telling S2 his lack of interest in talking about the star named Wengzhang proposed by S2. In line 11, S2's quick "yeah" in a lowered volume actually only serves as a turn-entry device rather than showing empathy to what S3 says. S2's intention to hold the turn to continue the topic about Wenzhang is evidenced in a conjunctional "and". S2's lengthening sound of "and" again shows his disfluency which gave a chance to S4 to jump in and took the turn off from S2 by showing her lack of interest too. Again, S2 still persists on talking about Wenzhang by throwing a question out in line 13. So we may see that mutuality has not been set up yet and rare instance of listener support exists and this actually leads to 2 topic-shifts.

Excerpt 2

    01 S2: [no:: I(.) I can't agree with <u>you.</u>]
    02 S3: [can we(.) can we change the] can we change the

03   topic because I didn't (.) I didn't notice news about him.
04 S2: so you [can] (.) you can have=
05 S3:   [ok]=[do you(.) do] you(.) do you know Maksim
06   Mrvica=.
07 S4:   [a new topic]
08 S1 S4: =↑no::
09 S2: I don't know at all.
10 S3: who played::((3.0)) 克罗地亚狂想曲
11   ((Croatian Rhapsody)) in::=
12 S1:=by the way, I want to (.) I want to ask you (.) m:: how
13   do you feel (1.0) like a (1.0) 那个 ((that)) for::: the singer in::
14   South Korea.=

In Excerpt 2, in line 2, S3 succeeds in taking the turn from the current speaker S2 using overlap-absorption technique—recycled turn beginning and makes his requirement for topic shift explicitly as S2 still persists in talking about Wenzhang, a film star S3 doesn't know much about. This is an abrupt topic shift which is not frequent in every-day conversations and if this type of topic shift is used frequently, then the conversation could be problematic (Sacks, 1992). Obviously, S3 doesn't succeed in managing the topic change — in line 12, S1 makes a disjunctive topic shift too (Jefferson, 1984), using explicit marker "by the way". *By the way* is one of the items used to indicate that an utterance is off-topic. Although S1 succeeds in gaining the turn by using a turn-entry device and makes a topic shift abruptly, she doesn't do this at a TRP and makes S2's words cut off, which can be considered to be "rude" in social interaction.

The second episode of the conversation is actually the main episode where compound TCUs, latched or overlapped turns and higher mutuality are displayed. Going through the transcript, we can see all the changes are due to a step-wise topic shift and this new topic seems to be one that all participants can relate to.

Excerpt 3

01 S2:= I don't ↑like(.)like them at all.
02 S1: me too ((nods head))=
03 S2: ↓ah
04 S1: I just can't understand why:: so many girl in our
05   country like them very much.
06 S2: because they are (.) they like the day dream=
07 S4: = it's a dream.
08 S2: = yeh, day dream, not only dream, it's day dream.
09 S4: = they think they e::r [some day] they'll meet the
10 (1.0) thing (.) the man like who handsome:: just a=
11 S2:   [they dream] oh:: ((looks a bit discouraged))
12 S1:= her husband?
13 S4: yes.

From line 12 in Excerpt 2, we know that S1 makes an abrupt topic shift and it seems that her intention is to talk about a certain singer in South Korea. This time, as can be seen in line 4

Excerpt 3, she makes a topic shift again, this time it is a stepwise shift in the form of a compound TCU, collaboratively completed by S1and S2's question and answer adjacency pair. Thereafter, everybody stays with this new topic which is about meeting a handsome South Korean man is a lot of Chinese girls' dream. Due to the huge impact that the South Korean's TV drama have on Chinese young people, some of South Korean's celebrities become idles especially of young girls in China. This is what the four students don't agree with. They seem to see eye to eye on this and everybody wants to have a say regarding this controversial phenomenon. So, the rest of conversation is all round it until the very last minute when the teacher signals them to finish the talk. Originally, the topic they were supposed to talk about was the celebrity they liked and as time went by, they were off the main topic and started to focus on a social phenomenon. The topic change has direct influence on their co-construction of the interaction. From this, it can be argued that the nature of the topic does have quite impact on interactivity and can lead to more engaged interaction.

Although many latched turns and overlap in this episode can show competition for the floor and active participation, it also reveals a salient feature of the interaction in terms of turn taking – they seem to be good at self-selecting the turn and get the speakership but rarely yield the turn. In other words, they are not familiar with the technique of bringing others to conversation in L2 interaction. This coincides with what the teacher-researcher often observes in her own classroom.

Excerpt 4

01 S3: because has they compared the reality (.)and the tele play to be found (.) or (.) or(.) our my relia, re, reality is too bad (1.0) they can find another way to (2.0)
02 S4: but I think [as as that]in they were, they will know (1.0) that as that(.) this dream=
03 S3:   [amuse themselves]
04 S4: = is not (will) never come true, they will find another dream (1.5) just like (2.0) e::m just like we will (0.5) we will live a (best)(.) oh no, just like they will have a happy life and a .hh (2.0) another fact, another were (0.5) =
05 S1: ((uses the left hand to cover her mouth and snickers)
06 S4: another ((speaks with slight chuckle)) dream (becau) (0.5)that （表示）！((stands for))=
07 S2: =yeh, that is to say e::r we (.) when the girls become old ,they will(.) will realize that they should to be (.) to be ru:: ru:: (1.0) they should to (0.5) go to their real life(.) to find e::r good man (2.0) even a good man e::r but he doesn't (.)look a look [handsome] (1.0) but she (.) but he is good to, good to marry (1.0) ((looks at S4)) so they will do that.=
08 S1: =[so]=
09 S3:= [however]
10 S4:= [unintelligble] ↑but they can find (.) as that in (.)they can find another way to find this dream , just like read some books and find the:::e::m and find the:: (2.0) *他们需要有价值的东西* ((they need something valuable))
11 S1: hh [so]
12 S3:   [how] however, no matter how(0.5) the reality (.) and the tele play e:r how…

In the above excerpt, latched turns prevail and everybody is competing for the floor. Overlaps occur too. From S1's turns, we can see she failed twice in getting the turn although she uses

"so" a turn-entry device at TRP in line 08 and . Instead, S4 gets the turn in line 10 and S3 gets the turn in line 12

4.2 Turn-taking and topic management in L1 interaction

Again, very different from interaction which goes on in classroom settings, this is a typical ordinary conversation with equal power speech exchanges. Turns are evenly distributed between participants in the conversation and everybody enjoys equal chances to gain the turn and keep the conversation going. The difference between interaction in students' native language, Chinese and L2, English in terms of turn-taking and topic management can be easily identified in the transcript. Compared with low-mutuality in the first episode of this group's L2 interaction, high-mutuality is quickly established at the beginning of their L1 interaction owing to very different turn allocations. In their L2 interaction, students mainly take speakership by self-selecting the turns, while in their L1 interaction, current-selects-next in the form of question-and-answer adjacency pair is much more frequent.

Excerpt 5

S1: 我特别想给你们推荐一部电影=
01 *I would very much like to recommend a film to you*=
02 S2：=嗯？
   =*mm?*
S1：叫(0.5)嗯:::蝴蝶效应
03 *Called (0.5)mm::: The Butterfly Effect*
S3: ((turns to S2))你知道吗？
04   *Do you know about it?*
S2：=我没看过，是关于什么的呢？
05   *I haven't seen it, what is it about*
S4: 蝴蝶效应就是J.麦凯伊拍摄的吗？=
06   *Is the Butterfly Effect directly by J. Mackye?*

It's very interesting to see that at the beginning of their L2 interaction, there are 2 topic shifts due to the students' unfamiliarity of the celebrity the others suggest to talk about. In their L1 interaction, when comes to unfamiliarity, instead of staving it off, everybody shows the interest in gaining more information by asking questions. In this short episode, in line 04, S3 takes the turn at TRP and immediately yields the turn to S2 by asking him if he knows about the film. From the ensuing exchange of communication, we know that S2 doesn't know about it either, but instead of asking for a topic change just like what he does in L2 conversation in Excerpt 2, he stays on the topic this time and ask a further question regarding the film.

What could be argued here is that in L2 interaction, students focus more on what they can say and eager to say it out so as to display their competence both in test and non-test situation and try to avoid talking about something they have little knowledge about. And that's why in test-situation, examiners find that test-takers in dyadic interaction or multi-party interaction tend to take long turns to express their opinions leading to low degree of mutuality among candidates (He &Ying 2006).

Asking questions is a very common and frequently used means to either let interaction flow or bring others onto the floor in L1 interaction and certainly not a sigh of less interactionally competent. Obviously, this is not naturally transferred to L2 interaction.

Another feature of students' L1 interaction with regard to turn-taking and topic management is that there are less abrupt topic shifts but more step-wise topic shifts.

Excerpt 6

S1：= 就是就是我觉得特别伤感=
01   =*yeah yeah I feel rather sad*=
S3：=你说这个=
02   = *you mean this*=
S2：=↑啊，很可惜这两部电影我都没看过=
03   *↑Ah, it's a pity that I haven't seen neither of these*=
S1：=我真的[想推荐啊这个]=
04 = *I really [want to recommend] this*=
S4：   [((inaudiable))]=
S3：=嗯:你们喜欢什么类型的？=
05 =*em: which type do you prefer?*=

According to Sacks (1992), "stepwise" topic shift is what he would count as good practice in conversation, that is, in conversation, probably the best way for topic transition is let topics flow "into" one another without obvious, detached and marked boundaries. The interaction before this one is all around the synopsis of the film. In line 4, S1expresses her positive feedback to the film by saying again that she wants to recommend the film to all. Actually she uses very similar sentence at the very beginning of the conversation to initiate this topic. S3 projects TCU completion and produces a response token em: at the right moment in the latched turn in line 6 and changes the topic from the content of the film to the type of film by asking the other students' preference.

4.3 Repair and intersubjectivity in L2 interaction

Interactional trouble is anything which the participants display as impeding speech production or intersubjectivity (Seedhouse & Egbert, 2004). Recognizing the breakdown of intersubjectivity and repairing it is an important component of IC. In the current study, the most common repair trajectory emerged in the L2 conversation is self-initiated, self-repair and the repair mainly concerns language production or grammatical errors. This might be due to the fact that they're very aware of their quite similar linguistic competence, so they don't bother to invite other's help, instead, they directly code-switch when trouble in language production occurs. What is also noticeable and evidenced in the transcript is when one member is struggling with word production, no help is offered at all from peers by using any repair strategy, such as conducting a confirmation check by asking a question like "do you mean..."? And this clearly indicates that the students at this level are not conscious of using repair resource to keep the flow of the communication. Not surprisingly, they always put the blame only on their vocabulary and grammar and more often than not, consider it as the only barrier to effective communication.

Excerpt 1 reproduced

   01 S1: for the topic I don't have a mm: the star which I most like (0.5)
   02　　[like most]
   03 S2: [Let's] talk about Wen Zhang
   04 S3: em::((shakes head))
   05 S1: I feel?e::r
   06 S2: e:r he always(.) he has always been been been thought thought
   07　　as as the best man in China but now (.) now we (2.0) ((struggles with
   08　　the word)).hh
   09 S3: I(.) I(.) I(.) have nothing about him except a tele play named 雪
  10　豹 ((Snow Leopard))=
  11 S2:=↓yeah (1.0) and::=
  12 S4: = I don't know about him.
  13 S2: 不二神探 ((Badges of Fury)) ((turns to S3))have you seen?
  14 S3: ((shakes head))

In line 7, L2 is struggling with a word but neither does he initiate a repair from others nor do others initiate a repair to offer listeners' support. This lack of others' support to overcome linguistic impasse doesn't echo with Gan's observation. He states that "linguistic problem encountered serve as the stimulus for collaborative dialogue" in group interaction (2010, p.597). Actually, what happens here is a familiar scenario to what the teacher-researcher observes from her own class. When a problem relating to word production crops up, normally, code-switching is the most frequently adopted method to conduct a self-repair. Peer assistance and scaffolding is not common at all.

The second salient feature of students' repair practice is rare instances of confirmation check, clarification request or other means of negotiating meaning which is considered to be the main means to achieve intersubjectivity in interaction. This finding coincides with He & Dai's (2006) study. They report the results of an investigation based on a large corpus from CET-SET (College English Test-Spoken Test) aiming to examine the degree of interaction in the group discussion. Their findings show a low degree of interaction which is supported by both quantitative and qualitative results. The quantitative analysis shows the frequency of the occurrence of ILFs (interactional functional knowledge), especially the function of supporting and negotiating meaning are very low (p.392). They attribute this to the test-setting in part. However, the data in this study reveals very similar findings in a non-test setting.

In the next example, students usually code switch from English to their mother tongue when encountering linguistic impasse.

Excerpt 7

01 S1: I think:: the three people is::(4.0) 都很委屈 ((aggrieved))
02 SS: heh heh
03 S4: yes (.)but I think the most (0.5) the (3.0) Wen Zhang is a (1.) 怎么说？((How should I say it) ((2.0)) e::r every(.) every mistake is from Wen Zhang=
04 S2: [no:: I(.) I can't agree with you.]

As can be seen from Excerpt 7, students conduct code-switching immediately when they have difficulty in word production. Although it is rare in a test-setting as points would be deducted if students code-switch in group discussion, it is quite a popular practice in EFL group talk when members of that group share the same mother language. In such a case, negotiation of meaning, is minimized to the extent and the opportunities for language development through negotiation of meaning is therefore lost. In the following exchange of communication which is extracted from a classroom group communication noted down by the teacher-researcher, in line 03, S3 produces a string of unintelligible words and S1 initiates a repair in line 04 on S3's trouble source. However, the repair practice is left uncompleted due to the "face" issue.

01 S1: The little one will have less responsibilities for the things. I'm the eldest one and I'll
02   have more responsibilities. What's your opinion? ((turns to L2))
03 S3: That's kind of...((unintelligible words))
04 S1: Mmm? ((rising tone))
05 S3: Never mind ((sounds very impatient)).
06 S1：((eyes move away from L3))

In line 05, S1's clarification request gets rejected by S3. The underlying cause is students' ignorance of the importance as well as the very presence of negotiation of meaning in ordinary conversation. When message didn't get across properly to the other side, students would feel embarrassed and associate this with their inaccurate use of vocabulary and low competence in communication. Giving up the chance to further clarifying and letting it go probably is the safest way to face-keeping and 'hiding' one's incompetence. As a result, by no means can intersubjectivity be achieved in such a case.

4.4 Repair and intersubjectivity in L1 interaction

When students talk in their native L1, there won't be too much trouble with language production unless they are trying to find a more accurate word to describe something. Our attention focuses on those that impede achievement of intersubjectivity. First, the common repair trajectory is other-initiated, self-repair. Second, repair is done mainly via negotiation of meaning, such as repetition request, clarification request, and confirmation checks.

Excerpt 8

S3:=嗯:你们喜欢什么类型的？=
01 em: What type of film do you like?
S4：=我喜欢那种结局比较圆满的或者说是::比较那种::就是情节比较好的=
02 =I prefer those that have a happy ending or:: ones:: that have a good plot=
S3：=类型=
03 =type
S1: = 我喜欢的是[构思比较好的]=
04 =I prefer those that have good conception=
S4:   [除了恐怖片]其它都好说
05 =I'm ok with anything apart from horror movies
S2：=构思？除了恐怖片？(.)对，恐怖片[我也看不下去].

06 = conception? Apart from horror movie? (.) Right, horror movie, I too can't bear keep watching it.

In the exchange in this excerpt, in line 1 S3 makes a step-wise topic shift orienting others to talk about different types of film rather than the plot of film – the topic of previous turns. However, as can be seen in line 2, S4's answer is still on the plot of films. So in line 3, S3 initiates a repair by repeating the word. This repetition of word "type" turns out to initiate two turns by two students; one is a self-repair from S4 who provides the answer in line 05 this time that fits in the question - the type of movie. And the other is an answer to S3's question from S1 in line 4. However, obviously S3 is still not satisfied by their answers as neither seems to give a direct answer to his question, so he initiates another repair via partial repetition of trouble source *conception and apart from horror movie* with rising tone. But after a very short pause, he conducts a same-turn repair by producing an agreement maker "dui" which means "right" in English. After that, he adds that he can't bear watching horror films either. His agreement is a demonstration of intersubjectivity achieved by repair practice.

Excerpt 9

S3:= 哦对了，说这里我想起来了最近我特别喜欢看那个 CC 电影=
01 Oh, right, talking about this, I remember that a CC movie I especially enjoy recently
S1:=CC?=
02 =CC?=
S4:=什么电影
03 =what film?
S3: 就是用电脑做出来的和真人特别像的这种电影.(1.0)
04 It's film made by computer and very much like real human film
S1:[(什么东西)]
05What stuff?
S4:[电脑做的]？ =
06 made by computer?

This is a typical example of other-initiated repair via partial repetition of trouble source as in line 2, clarification request as in line 3 and line 5, confirmation check as in line 6.

Compared with rare instances of repair relating to understanding in L2 interaction, far more instances of repair to make sense of each other' meaning in L1 interaction can serve as a very good proof that repair is omnipresent in interaction conducted in native language. It again is not symptomatic of a disfluent or incompetent speaker but an important component of interactional competence (Wong & Waring 2010, p.211) From the comparison of repair conducted in L1 and L2, we can see that student's L1 IC relating to repair practice is not transferred to L2 IC and therefore need pedagogical intervention which can make them more aware of the importance of repair - the means to achieve intersubjectivity.

4.5 Alignment and co-construction of confluence in L2 interaction

The co-constructive nature of interaction necessitates efforts of "collaborating, cooperating and coordinating" on the part of all participants in the interaction (Dings, 2007). From a CA perspective, the term *alignment* can be defined as the procedures utilized by speakers to

demonstrate how they position themselves with respect to other interactants' messages and it is a key resource for jointly co-constructing the interaction (Marta Tecedor, p.40, 2013). In this part, the researcher wants to find out what a second speaker does across the turn-boundaries to collaborate with a previous speaker through analysis of students' alignment activity based on Dings' categorization (2007, 2014). The 3 types of alignment activity identified are (1) assessment activity; (2) collaborative completions; and (3) collaborative contributions

The characteristics relating to assessment activity in L2 interaction are (1) student's minimal response through vocalizations such as *mm, uh*; response token *yes and yeah* accompanied by nods and smiles; (2) lack of very commonly-used token in English conversation like exactly, certainly, sure etc.; (3) no instances of elaborate assessments such as *that's + adjective (that's right, that's true)* (McCarthy, 2003).

The only "Ok" in conversation is used as a turn-entry device at TRP rather than acknowledgement token. According to McCarthy, "although *yes* would have functioned as adequate acknowledgements of understanding, agreement etc., it would have had less engaged interactional implications than *yes-plus* words, in that they do more than just acknowledge or confirm the receipt and understanding of incoming talk, and project engagement and interactional bonding with interlocutors" (2003: 8).

Excerpt 10

01 S1: but I don't think this kind of mind is::ah (1.0) >is good<
02 S2: huh:
03 S4: yeah, it's no good=
04 S1: =mm::

Although student's display a weak performance in assessment activity, they perform much more alignment moves in the form of collaborative contribution in the 2nd episode of their interaction.

Excerpt 4 (reproduced)

01 S3: because has they compared the reality (.)and the tele play to be found (.) or (.) or(.) our my relia, re, reality is too bad (1.0) they can find another way to (2.0)
02 S4: but I think [as as that]in they were, they will know (1.0) that as that(.) this dream=
03 S3:   [amuse themselves]
04 S4: = is not (will) never come true, they will find another dream (1.5) just like (2.0) e::m just like we will (0.5) we will live a (best)(.) oh no, just like they will have a happy life and a .hh (2.0) another fact, another were (0.5) =
05 S1: ((uses the left hand to cover her mouth and snickers)
06 S4: another ((speaks with slight chuckle)) dream (becau) (0.5)that （表示）！ ((stands for))=
07 S2: =yeh, that is to say e::r we (.) when the girls become old ,they will(.) will realize that they should to be (.) to be ru:: ru:: (1.0) they should to (0.5) go to their real life(.) to find e::r good man (2.0) even a good man e::r but he doesn't (.)look a look [handsome] (1.0) but she (.) but he is good to, good to marry (1.0) ((looks at S4)) so they will do that.=

08 S1: =[so]=
09 S3:= [however]
10 S4:= [unintelligble] ↑but they can find (.) as that in (.)they can find another way to find
    this dream , just like read some books and find the:::e::m and find the:: (2.0) *他们需要有*
    价值的东西((they need something v<u>aluable</u>))
11 S1: hh [so]
12 S3:   [how] however, no matter how(0.5) the reality (.) and the tele play e:r how…

As can be seen from Excerpt 4, there are lots of pauses within one's turn and grammatical errors and broken sentences. If we only concentrate on the individual performance of the speaker, all of these probably can be a good indicator of speaker's disfluency and being incompetent as an interactant. But, if we look at this episode of interaction as a whole, the latched or overlapped turns shows a smooth and rapid flow of the conversation, hence, co-constructing "confluence" (McCarthy, 2005). Another proof for their successful co-construction is when the teacher-researcher came to the room and signal to them time is up for conversation, they said there were still a lot of things they wanted to say regarding the topic, they haven't done yet! What this implies is that the pleasure from their co-construction of interaction indeed gains an upper hand over their struggle within the turn.

However, the lack of collaborative completion in which an interactant completes another interactant's utterance exemplifying a high degree of alignment probably is a display of this group of students' limited linguistic competence.

4.6 Alignment and co-construction of confluence in L1 interaction

The characteristics of fast speaker change, very rich instances of collaborative completion and collaborative contribution are easily identified in the transcript of their L1 interaction.

When looking at assessment moves, we can find the most frequently used is a one word response marker *dui* which can be thought to parallel English *yes or right*. In Chinese interaction, *dui* conveys acknowledgment of the propositional content of the utterance produced by the other speaker and functions to construct conversational alignment and coherence in talk (Wang et al., 2010, p.12). So, the preference for the assessment (response) marker yeah/yes may be explained by the transfer of the pragmatic meaning of the equivalent marker *dui* used in Chinese interaction. Likewise, the repetition of *dui* to make a *dui dui dui* in L1 interaction could be held responsible for the occurrence of students' use of a consecutive *yeah, yeah, yeah* in their L2 interaction. However, as mentioned above in L2 interaction, students never use exactly, certainly, absolutely, of course, sure etc. which are very frequently-used tokens for agreement and acknowledgement in English conversations. For example, people use *tai dui le* in Chinese showing strong degree of agreement. But student always use a higher-pitched *yes*, or *Yes, I think so* instead of using tai dui le's equivalent *Absolutely true*.

From what is revealed in present study and the teacher-research's observation of classroom group interaction, actually students' are relatively weak in assessment activity due to the fact that they indeed don't have a good command of knowledge relating to how to give timely feedback in various ways. They seem to be more focused on contributing ideas. That's where misunderstanding come about and break-down of intersubjectivity occur.

5 Transferability of interactional competence and pedagogical implications

Although a large number of work has been done to investigate the development of students' L2 interactional competence (IC), the transferability of IC is still largely understudied. No previous research has been designed specifically to examine IC transfer in terms of deployment of interactional resources, ie., turn-taking, repair and alignment. Therefore, this exploratory study attempts to contribute to this understudied area by answering the aforementioned question: whether, and if so how, the students who are already interactionally competent in their L1 can use transfer from their L1 to help with their L2 interactions. For this purpose, the teacher-researcher looked at two topical talk conducted respectively in L1 Chinese and L2 English by the same group of 4 students with very similar English proficiency. After the teacher-researcher carefully examined the transcribed data following CA transcription conventions, what have been emerged concerning transferability of IC are as follows:

(1) In L2 topical talk, in terms of turn-taking and topic management, students are better at self-selecting the turn and are lack of strategies of yielding the turn to bring others onto the 'floor'. When they come across the topic they are less familiar with, they tend to make abrupt topic shifts to avoid talking about something they know little of. The underlying reason for this could be talking about something unfamiliar will make a greater challenge to their linguistic resources. On the contrast, in L1 topical talk, turns are evenly distributed between participants in the conversation and current-selects-next in the form of question-and-answer adjacency pair is much more prevalent. Asking questions is a very common and frequently used means to either let interaction flow or bring others onto the floor in L1 interaction and certainly not a sign of less interactionally competent. Apparently, this is not naturally transferred to students' L2 interaction

(2) In L2 topical talk, in terms of repair, there is a preference for self-initiated self-repair. And trouble-source for repair mainly concerns with vocabulary. Code-switching seems to be the most-frequently used means to fix the trouble. In their L1 talk, compared with very rare instances of confirmation checks, clarification requests or other means of negotiating meaning in students' L2 talk, repair is done mainly via negotiation of meaning and the common repair trajectory is other-initiated, self-repair. From the comparison of repair conducted in L1 and L2, we can see that student's L1 IC relating to repair practice is not transferred to L2 IC and hence need pedagogical intervention which can make them more aware of the importance of repair - the means to achieve intersubjectivity. To encourage students to practice more negotiation for meaning in their communication, EFL teachers need to firstly help students to change the mindset that repair is kind of indication of incompetency. On the contrary, knowing when to repair and how to repair is an essential component of interactional competence.

(3) In L2 topical talk, in terms of alignment, students display a weak performance in assessment activity which is supported by the fact that few instances of elaborate assessments can be found in the transcript. Students limit their response by only providing response token *yes and yeah* or through vocalizations such as *mm, uh, huh.* The preference for the assessment (response) marker yeah/yes may be explained by the transfer of the pragmatic meaning of the equivalent marker *dui* used in L1 interaction. And the repetition of dui to make a *dui dui dui* in L1 interaction could be held responsible for the occurrence

of students' use of a consecutive *yeah, yeah, yeah* in their L2 interaction too. However, the teacher-researcher also finds that although in Chinese, people use *tai dui le* showing strong degree of agreement, in L2 topical talk, students never use tai dui le's equivalent "*Absolutely true*" or other frequently-used tokens for strong agreement and acknowledgement in English conversations, such as, exactly, certainly, absolutely, of course and so on. Just as O'Keeffe et al. (2007, p.157) argue that […] "while a form may have an equivalent in another language, it does not mean that it is directly transferable in all instances".

Based on the findings, it can be argued that a large part of L2 IC especially relating to turn taking, repair and alignment is not automatically transferred from L1 IC. In order to help students to develop their interactional competence, those concepts and strategies related need to be made explicit to EFL learners and there is a necessity to teach students' how to employ the interactional resources so as to co-construct fluid interaction and achieve "confluence".

Acknowledgement

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