More than Language: Influential Factors on Language Classroom Practice

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Chang, Sunmee. 2006. **More than Language: Influential Factors on Language classroom practice.** *The Linguistic Association of Korea Journal, 14*(3), 71-93. From the underlying sociocultural perspective, this paper dealt with L2 learning situations in many countries in the world. The concept of L2 (Second Language) here encompassed that of FL (foreign Language), too. In this paper, by reviewing articles and books, and building up ideas around selected themes, I discussed on some factors that were considered possible to impose influence on the practice in the classroom. First of all, with an assumption that each of the participants in a L2 classroom has individual cultural background, their social identity, socioeconomic status, teaching and learning style, and prior experience or knowledge that they bring in were considered the first category of major influential factors in the classroom. The second category was put under classroom interaction. Classroom interaction was discussed in two aspects, teacher-student and student-student interaction. The final category put emphasis on the teacher, focusing on the knowledge and beliefs he/she has as a teacher during classroom practice. Even though the role of the teacher is huge, the practice in the classroom is not just done by the teacher alone. It should be remembered that the teacher is a necessary partner for the learners in the interaction to coach the learners in their process of learning, thinking, listening, and speaking toward the ultimate goal: L2 acquisition.

Key Words: discourse analysis, classroom interaction, talk, IRE, IRF, display question

1. Introduction

Unlike other ordinary classrooms, second language (L2) classrooms are full of diversity. Teachers and students from different backgrounds bring many elements of their own into the classroom. With all these

elements, people (teacher, students) in the classroom communicate with one another to reach the goals they have set. In L2 classrooms, the language, whether it is English or another language, is the medium through which teachers teach, and students demonstrate what they have learned (Johnson, 1995). To let the acquisition of that language occur is the ultimate instructional goal of L2 education. So, how teachers and students communicate in L2 classrooms mediates between teaching, learning, and L2 acquisition. However, that communication is not just a simple act occurring in the classroom. It is only achieved when the multi-faceted aspects of teachers and learners orchestrate in harmony. Successful communication in the classroom is the most critical condition for L2 acquisition. Therefore, investigating what kinds of elements, aspects, or factors play roles in the L2 learning & teaching process for learners is very important. Here are some possible factors that have great impact on the practices in an L2 classroom.

2. What is Brought into the Classroom?

2.1. Social Identity and Socioeconomic Status

One's social identity has an important bearing on ones attitudes, values, aspirations, and academic achievement individuals take on attributes that signify group membership, such as preferences in music, elements of dress, and ways of speaking. Language is a signal par excellence of group membership and an important attribute of social identity for members of a language community (Ehrman & Dornyei, 1998).

Language teachers and students in any setting naturally represent a wide array of social and cultural roles and identities, as expatriates or nationals, as native speakers (NSs) or nonnative speakers (NNs), as content-area or TESOL (Teaching English to the Speakers of Other Languages)/English language specialists, as individuals with political convictions, and as members of families, organizations, and society at large (Duff & Uchida, 1997). Sociocultural identities and ideologies are

not static, deterministic constructs that ESL/EFL (English as a Second Language/English as a Foreign Language) teachers and students bring to the classroom and then take away unchanged at the end of a lesson or course (Kramsch, 1993). Nor are they simply dictated by membership in a larger social, cultural, or linguistic group. Rather, in educational practice as in other facets of social life, identities and beliefs are co-constructed, negotiated, and transformed on an ongoing basis by means of language (Kramsch, 1993).

Duff and Uchida's study (1997) showed how two teachers changed the understandings of what constitutes culture and of how they viewed themselves in terms of their various social and cultural roles, as they perceived a variety of students' point of view regarding their (the students) identities in their (the students) culture. In each teacher's class in this study, the many layers of cultural transmission, negotiation, and creation revealed interacted with the teacher's development of their personal sociocultural identities and roles during the classroom practice. McKay and Wong (1996) also presented representative cases of second language (L2) learners bringing their own identities into the classroom. The norm of model minority discourse (e.g. Asians are smart), colonist/racially based discourse, and gender discourse seemed to be imposed on L2 learners in the classroom, allowing some of them to be successful learners, while making some others face insurmountable obstacles to their learning English as an L2.

Along with the element of identity, L2 learners are positioned by their socioeconomic status they bring into the classroom. Mckay and Wongs study (1996) also showed how a Chinese L2 learner with lower socioeconomic status stood no chance of competing with his Taiwanese peers who had relatively higher socioeconomic status, and how this situation impacted on his L2 learning in the classroom. Lin's study (1999) suggested another case of the impact of socioeconomic factors on L2 learners. In her study, four classrooms situated in different socioeconomic environments were investigated. Overall, a group of learners in the classroom with the highest socioeconomic background had both the correct attitudes and interest and the correct linguistic

skills and confidence to participate in high-level discussions on the themes of the story in English with one another and the teacher, whereas those in the classroom with relatively lower socioeconomic status showed habitus (Bourdieu, 1991) incompatible with what the English lesson required of them. One thing very encouraging for L2 teaching is that one group of learners with a disadvantaged socioeconomic background was transforming their negative habitus through the creative, discursive agency and efforts of their teacher. One more case is found in Willet's study (1995) where a boy couldn't be successful in conducting behavior compatible with his L2 learning because of his lower socioeconomic background that had a significant influence on his learning attitude.

   While clinging to what they originally have as members of their own community, sometimes teachers and students develop new forms of social identities and statuses as they become aware of the new conditions and environment in the classroom. Successful identity or status transformation is consequent upon positive results of L2 acquisition.

2.2. Way of Teaching and Learning Influenced by Social Context

 Society can be interpreted as all of those wider contexts in which the institutions in which language teaching takes place are situated (Coleman, 1996a). These include the international, national, community, ethnic, bureaucratic, professional, political, religious, linguistic, economic and family contexts in which schools and other educational institutions are located and with which they interact. Coleman cited identification of attitudes toward the role of literacy: autonomous vs. ideological. An autonomous approach assumes that literacy has an identical function in every society; in other words, all literate cultures ought to employ literacy for the same purposes. On the other hand, an ideological approach is culturally embedded and recognizes the significance of the socialization process in the construction of the meaning of literacy for members of society. In other words, literacy is allowed to mean

whatever the culture in which it is found wants it to mean. The latter attitude seems to be much more plausible based on all the facts found in many studies in which language teaching activities are influenced by the social contexts in which institutions are situated.

Coleman's study (1996b) introduced the contextual impact on language teaching and learning in Indonesian university English classrooms. The most astonishing aspect of behavior during the lesson was that a harmonious relationship appeared to exist between teachers and students, despite the fact that interaction between the two parties in the classroom was so limited. Teachers mainly paid attention to grammar structure and did not seem to care about those students who also did not pay attention to what the teachers said. However, interestingly, those behaviors did not mean that they were not teaching or learning a lot, rather they followed their own way of effective teaching and learning. This static teaching and learning situation can be understood in the light of the general concept of language education among Indonesian educationists. They barely pay attention to teaching methodology and classroom interaction, which are considered the most important elements for language education in western countries. The behavior patterns among teachers and students shown in the Indonesian English classrooms are an appropriate reflection of the social context outside the classroom.

Shamin (1996) reported an account of the problems she faced in trying to introduce an innovative approach to teaching and learning, based on the communicative methodology of language teaching, in her English language classrooms of Pakistan. She tried to give her students more responsibility for creating a learner-centered classroom atmosphere. This attempt was quite innovative since the traditional style of teaching in Pakistan is largely teacher-centered and based on the lecture method; thus the learners are passive listeners with virtually no opportunities to become active participants in the teaching/learning process. The innovative methodology she was trying to introduce required a major redefinition of the authority structure in the classroom and was largely incongruent. This innovative trial caused anxiety

among the learners about the stability of roles and responsibilities in the classroom and a disruption of the essential norms of behavior in the well-established social order in which the teacher has the authority in the classroom. By stepping out of her traditional role and changing the routine structure of the classroom event, the teacher seemed to provide a sanction to the learners to indulge in forms of behavior that would be termed deviant in the framework of a traditional classroom. Thus, the effect of context (home, teaching/learning in other subject classes, behavior patterns in the family, and other social networks) on classroom processes cannot be underestimated.

Canagarajah's ethnographic study (1993) revealed that even though their culture displayed opposition to the alienating discourses contained in a U.S. textbook, the students affirm in their more conscious statements before and after the course their strong motivation to study ESL. Interpreting this contradiction as reflecting the conflict students face between cultural integrity and socioeconomic mobility, the study explains how students desire for learning only grammar in a product-oriented manner enables them to be somewhat detached from cultural alienation while being sufficiently examination oriented to pass the course and fulfill a socioeconomic necessity. These students' two-pronged strategy contains elements of accommodation as well as resistance, unwittingly leading students to participate in their own domination. As a matter of fact, this study also gives us another case of the impact of social context on the learners learning behavior and attitude in the classroom.

A couple of points have been made, concerning the impact of social context in the classroom. First, the traditional concept of education in a certain social context is so influential and stubborn that it has a huge impact on the classroom practices, and that it is necessary to involve not only the teachers but also those who are to implement the changes when it needs to be reformed. Second, attention has been drawn to the notion of potential mismatch between planned curriculum and current practices and classroom behavior: theoretically innovative approaches can trigger conflicts and tensions in the classroom where the learners have

been educated through traditional education methods that are general in their society. The last point concerns the role which L2 plays in a certain social context: the role of L2 (e.g. English) is implied in the curriculum and even in the students motivation for learning. Social contextual impact is explicit in the classroom.

2.3. Prior Experience/Knowledge

L2 students enter classrooms with an accumulation of prior experiences and knowledge through which they interpret the world around them. Embedded in this knowledge is their use of language, the medium through which they represent their experiences to themselves and to others, and all the components they already acquired in their first language (L1) and culture or communities. When the students enter L2 classrooms, they may continue to rely on ways of knowing, understanding, communicating, participating, and learning acquired through their native language (Johnson, 1995). If the patterns of learning and communication that are established and maintained in L2 classrooms inhibit students opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and use of language, teachers may inaccurately assess their students academic abilities and achievements (Johnson, 1995).

According to Johnson, the ways in which teachers organize the patterns of classroom communication can be understood by their frames of reference. These include aspects of teachers professional and practical knowledge that shape how they interpret and understand their own and their students communicative behavior. Thus, teacher's frames of reference encompass the range of their prior experiences as students and as second language learners, the nature of their professional knowledge and how that knowledge develops over time, the theoretical beliefs they hold about how second languages are learned and how they should be taught, and the ways in which they make sense of their own teaching experiences. Prior knowledge and beliefs of teachers will be discussed more in an individual section in a later part of this paper.

Sperling and Woodlief (1997) proved in their study conducted in two

English classrooms that writing and learning to write for all students are intertwined between students and their multiple social worlds. The study, whose main purpose was to find how different teachers and students participate in the classroom community as they bring their in-class and out-of-class experiences to bear on learning, suggested that students' own prior experiences and the experiences of others like them were topics that allowed them to develop questions and expand ideas for writing.

   Students' prior knowledge or experiences also impact their reading comprehension process. Bugel and Buunk's (1996) study reported that, owing to sex differences in prior knowledge and interests, the topic of the test is an important factor for L2 learners in dealing with text comprehension. The result of this study explained the reason why female students showed relatively lower achievement than male students, pointing out possible sex differences in socialization experiences, beliefs, attributions, expectations, and self-image (e.g. males generally watch more television, are more interested in computers, technical matters, and sports while females tend to prefer social, home, and artistic activities and read relatively more and different books and magazines than do males.). As a result of such differences, female students may have other expectations of success and attach other subjective values to various achievement activities than do male students. It is assumed that female students did not do well on text comprehension tests because the topics of the text were more related to the knowledge or experiences of male students.

   Students' prior knowledge and experiences surely have great impact on classroom practice.

3. Classroom Interaction

   In contexts where groups of learners pursue their language studies together in a classroom setting, the interactions they experience among themselves constitute additional powerful influences on the learning process. Ehrman and Dornyei (1998) said that interactions are both the

fuel for learning and potentially the source of a great deal of disruption: at the individual level, the learners produce and enhance motivation to learn other languages and cultures and to interact with speakers of the language; on the other hand, classroom interaction can be fraught with massive anxiety about how one is perceived and accepted by others, which can interfere greatly with achievement. Between individuals, these processes can bring about cooperation or collaboration that enhances the work of both parties (or multiparties), or they can result in friction and disaffection. However, overall, it is true that every individual must interact with others in order to accomplish whatever goals he/she has set, to become involved in those set by others, or to negotiate and work through a set of mutually defined goals (Hall, 1995). In a word, the interactions in the classroom are very influential in learning languages.

3.1. Student-Student Interaction

Based on sociocultural theory, human cognition develops first through social interaction. Learning first takes place between a novice learner and a more capable peer (or peers). This dependent nature of learning transforms into something more independent at a later phase. When a novice is able to accomplish a certain task independently, he or she can achieve something even more difficult and complex, if given appropriate assistance by a more capable peer (scaffolding). This area of growth was defined as the zone of proximal development (ZPD) by Vygotsky (1978). The concept of scaffolding in ZPD is usually more talked about in the case of teacher and student interaction, in which a unidirectional help is offered from the teacher to students. However, the concept is also applicable in this section since the cooperative or collaborative work among language learners provides the same opportunity for scaffolded help as in expert-novice relationships in the classroom setting. And also it can be assumed that scaffolding is not limited to expert-novice relationships but also occurs in student-student interactions. Anyway, here the concept of scaffolding is a premise for the interaction among learners.

In his study, Donato (1994) attempted to illustrate how three students co-construct language learning experiences in the classroom setting. These three learners were able to collectively construct a scaffolding from each others performance. They jointly managed components of the problem, marked critical features of discrepancies between what has been produced and the perceived ideal solution, and minimized frustration and risk by relying on the collective resources of the group. Learners were capable of providing guided support to their peers during collaborative L2 interactions in ways analogous to expert scaffolding. Collective scaffolding may result in linguistic development in the individual learner. In the process of peer scaffolding, learners can expand their own L2 knowledge and extend the linguistic development of their peers.

Another example of scaffolding during the interaction among students is found in Ohta's recent study (2000). Students private speech, which functions as a tool for the internalization of the L2, played a role in enhancing language proficiency among themselves. As they spoke privately, their own utterances were available to them for comparison with the utterances of other classmates. When the learner's own response was incorrect, provided utterances functioned as unintentional recasts. The results of this study suggest that the salient contrasts presented by recasts through the private speech in the L2 classroom impact the language development of the learners who notice and utilize them in their mental activity, even if the learners are not being addressed.

DiCamilla and Anton's study (1997) does show an example of scaffolding among L2 learners in the classroom setting. Their study investigated the role of repetition in the discourse of students of Spanish as a L2 working on a writing assignment in collaborative dyads. The study shows that the sociocultural and mental activity of the subjects was mediated by the repetition of both L1 and L2 utterances, the effect of which was to create and maintain a shared perspective of the task and to construct scaffolded help, which enabled them to complete their tasks. Through the repetition, students

maintained intersubjectivity (shared perspective), providing each other with effective help (scaffolding) in collaborative activities in the language classroom.

Diamondstone's study (1999) showed unique features of interactions. She investigated how two students who saw themselves as inexpert writers in relation to two relatively expert peers used talk about text to position themselves in relation to one another. The discursive maneuvers of one male student aligned him with the relative experts while positioning the other female student as less competent than he. It apparently worked to his advantage as a learner, getting him into the text-making process and contributing to his sense of efficacy in academic endeavor. Whereas the female student resisted his determination of her incompetence by construing a meta-textual domain in which she could compare her own text favorably to that of another relatively expert peer. In a way, she was marginalized by and didnt get any proper scaffolded help from the male expert peer in the study, but in another way, she was scaffolded by another peer with whom she acted favorably. This study demonstrates that scaffolding is done selectively according to the novice learner's preference.

All four studies discussed above showed vivid examples of student-student interactions. Even though the learners in each study showed different features of peer interaction, such as collaborations, recasts through private speech, collaborative dyads, and sometimes, showing resistance, they all gained appropriate help from their peers (scaffolding) in reaching their goals of learning, L2 acquisition. __

3.2. Teacher-Students Interaction

As already indicated above, much of language learning occurs in the classroom especially through the interaction. There are three elements that comprise a language classroom: the teacher, learners, and languages (L1, L2). The teacher seems to be the most important element since he/she integrates every element under his/her rule to create or facilitate an appropriate learning environment in the classroom. Teachers can

foster classroom conditions that encourage or restrict successful student participation. The teacher is the one who should be aware of differences among learners to diagnose needs, apply the proper level of learning support (e.g. scaffolding) at any given time, and withdraw it at the right time. Thus the interaction between the teacher and students can be considered more significant than that between students in terms of impact on the language learning process in the classroom.

Boyd and Maloof (2000) did a study focusing on ways the classroom teacher can orchestrate and support a kind of classroom discourse that engenders active student talk that leads to L2 learning based on the assumption that students learn through talking. This study examined the classroom discourse in an ESL classroom and focused on the role of the teacher in facilitating extended discourse. It uncovered what the students are talking about and the ways the teacher builds on and incorporates intertextual (making connection between texts) links into the classroom discourse. As findings, there were five types of student-proposed intertextual links: literature based, language and culture, personal, universal, and classroom community. These links were acknowledged through the teacher roles of affirmer, questioner, and clarifier. By engaging students in IRE patterns (Initiation, Response, Evaluation/Follow-up), the teacher shaped the classroom discourse and consequently the type of language learning that occurred. The teacher was able to support student utterances by selectively acknowledging and incorporating student-proposed intertextual links and student-initiated words into the classroom discourse, taking the major role in facilitating better learning environment in the classroom.

Hall's study (1998) shows the unique and dynamic aspects of teacher-student interaction in the classroom. She proposes that the content and processes of student learning are fundamentally tied to the instructional practices created in their classroom interaction. A variety of turn-taking patterns of learners in the classroom were reported. The patterns were found in the typical form of 3-part IRF (Initiation, Response, Evaluation/Follow-up), where the teacher and students take turns. The teacher's powerful role in distributing learning opportunities

to learners, and subsequently in creating two different groups of learners (primary and secondary) was another salient example of classroom interactions in language learning.   The differential treatment in terms of teacher attention to student turns in the IRF exchange facilitated some and limited other students' participation in this practice. More active learning should have been achieved, considering the fact that IRF itself is an active form of interaction. However, the teachers pattern of giving turns to his students was not sufficient to give each student the opportunity to enhance his/her learning.

Takahashi et al (2000) investigated language development in a classroom through the analysis of Instructional Conversations (ICs), looking at how they teachers and students construct knowledge about ongoing events, how they bring past knowledge into learning, and how they create a communal sense of what counts. They found that analysis of ICs reveals the values, knowledge, and skills important to learning and created in the conversations between students and teachers, identifying particular contexts and the variety and complexity of the participants developing understandings and ways of making sense.

Another dialogic teacher's role is found in Verplaetse's research (2000). In this study, interaction means the opportunity to produce output, thus to practice extended discourse. Such opportunities include negotiation occurring as students and teacher collaboratively work through extended discourse to make sense of an idea. The teacher described in this study used interaction expertly. He used a variety of feedback features, such as questioning, repetition, back-channels, and paraphrases as the acts of acceptance, especially when issued after a student's incorrect or insufficient answer. In so doing, he provided students with the opportunities to produce extended output and to negotiate meaning through repair work. As Verplaetse speculated in this study, given the highly interactive practices of the teacher and students, particularly the nonjudgmental, listening nature of teacher responses, even the LEP students (Less English Proficient students) were drawn into the participation, gaining confidence in their ability to speak in full-class discussion.

L2 learners can learn language through peer interaction, in context, and from their experiences. However, there seems to be nothing more effective in getting appropriate help than direct interaction with the teacher. Overall, it can be said that classroom practice is mainly decided by the kinds of interaction the teacher and students have in the classroom

4. Teacher's Knowledge and Beliefs

In the field of second language acquisition (SLA), we have been slow to recognize that teaching needs to be examined and understood on its own terms, in the same way that researchers have examined learning. The work of language teachers shapes multiple activities in the field of SLA. The content and processes of language learning are fundamentally related to the instructional practices created in the classroom. Despite the significance of the teacher's role, a great deal of research has focused mainly on learning and learner's aspects while language teaching and the work of language teachers have been tacit and often unquestioned. However, we should acknowledge the importance of the teacher's role as the main influence on language learning in the classroom. Actually, there is not much difference between looking at teachers and learners in terms of investigating actual language acquisition occurring in the classroom. However, if we were to take a look at things from teachers perspectives, the interpretation of language learning in the classroom would be different.

4.1. What are Teacher's Knowledge and Beliefs?

A traditional view of teacher's knowledge has dominated educational research over the past 30 years: teachers knowledge was assumed to be an extended body of empirically derived theories and facts based on research on how students learn and what effective teachers do (Johnson, 1999). This viewpoint fails to recognize that teachers already have a wealth of knowledge about teachers and teaching based largely

on their experiences as learners. Based on research on what teachers actually know, how they think about their teaching, why they teach the way they do, an alternative view of teachers knowledge has emerged from educational research. This alternate view characterizes a teacher's knowledge as internal to the teacher, and recognizes teacher's prior experiences, personal values, and individual purposes in their teaching (Elbaz, 1983). This view also argues that what teachers know about teaching is inseparable from who they are as people and what they do in their classrooms. Teachers' memories and experiences as students impact their teaching in the classroom. We can say that teachers teach the way they were taught.

Obviously, teachers possess a great deal of experiential knowledge, based largely on their prior learning. The relationship between teaching and experience inside and outside the classroom is characterized as practical knowledge (Elbaz, 1983) or personal practical knowledge (Clandinin, 1986). Golombeck (1998) cited Elbaz as she identified the content of practical knowledge as knowledge of self, the milieu of teaching, subject matter, curriculum development, and instruction. She also identified practical knowledge as situational, theoretical, personal, social, and experiential. Johnson (1999) also categorized teacher's practical knowledge in four areas, which she called professional knowledge: subject matter knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and knowledge of context. Overall, teachers knowledge consists of a combination of experiential and professional knowledge that shapes their reasoning and is tacitly embodied in their classroom practices.

What are teachers beliefs? Johnson (1994) said that beliefs have a cognitive, an affective, and a behavioral component and therefore act as influences on what we know, feel, and do. All human perception is influenced by beliefs, influencing the ways in which events are understood and acted on. Teacher's beliefs interrelate with all other beliefs; they have a filtering effect on everything that teachers think about, say, and do in classrooms (1994, p. 440). Teachers beliefs tend to be grounded in powerful episodic memories from prior learning and

teaching experiences, so they may reflect an extremely narrow view of teachers and teaching, and thus limit the range of instructional considerations and classroom practices that teachers are willing or able to consider (Johnson, 1999). The confusion generally centers on the distinction between beliefs and knowledge. In all cases, it is difficult to pinpoint where knowledge ends and belief begins. Most descriptions have been simply different words meaning the same thing.

Teacher's knowledge and beliefs have a powerful impact on the nature of teacher's reasoning since the ways in which teachers come to conceptualize themselves as teachers and develop explanations for their own classroom practices tend to be filtered through their knowledge and beliefs (Johnson, 1999).

4.2. Teacher's knowledge and Beliefs Working in the Classroom

Richards (1996) contends that teachers employ two major types of knowledge when they teach. One relates to subject matter and curricular issues and how the content of a lesson can be presented in an effective and coherent way, and the other kind of knowledge relates to the teachers view of what constitutes good teaching. The latter is the dimension that forms the variety of teachers teaching in the classroom. According to Richards, when teachers talk about their teaching they generally present a rational view of the kind of learning environment they try to create in their classes. Richards introduces a term maxim when he suggests that teachers belief systems lead to the development of rational reasoning which serves as a source of how teachers interpret their responsibilities and implement their plans and which motivates teachers interactive decisions during a lesson. Thus, each teacher's own knowledge and beliefs create a different kind of decision making in the classroom.

Borg (1998) also investigated teacher's personal pedagogical systems stores of beliefs, knowledge, theories, assumptions, and attitudes that play a significant role in shaping teacher's instructional decisions, focusing on grammar teaching. Those systems are usually formed by

teacher's previous learning experience. The difference between Borg's research about teacher's beliefs and Richards' is found in their points of view. Richards' discussion about teacher's beliefs that can be applied in the classroom seems to be more general and mainly from teachers perspective. However, Borg investigated teacher's beliefs applied to specific situations formed mainly by students in the classroom. We can see teacher's reasoning with their beliefs as they realize the context and get the response from students in the classroom.

Golombeck (1998) pointed out a couple of points about teacher's knowledge and beliefs. Teacher's personal practical knowledge and beliefs inform practice, first, in that they guide teacher's sense making processes. In other words, knowledge and beliefs filter experience so that teachers reconstruct it and respond to the exigencies of a teaching situation. Second, each context reshapes what teachers know and believe, even though their fundamental beliefs are still inflexible to change. According to Golombeck, in this way, teachers practical knowledge and beliefs reshape and are shaped by understanding of the teaching and learning context in the classroom. He added that the way teachers understand and respond to their classroom is mediated by their experiences as teachers, learners, and persons outside the classroom.

4.3. Knowledge and Beliefs Specific for L2/Language Teacher

Since teacher's knowledge and beliefs about teaching are combined and modified with the different context of each classroom in leading their students to learning, it is not hard to think that there are some specific kinds of knowledge and beliefs for L2 and language teachers.

Even though few attempts have been made to characterize L2 (especially ESL) teachers' theoretical beliefs, based on small amount of research available, we can say that the majority of L2 teachers possess clearly defined theoretical beliefs which reflect methodological approaches. Johnson (1992) categorized three theoretically derived explanations of how languages are learned which have influenced the methodological approaches toward L2 teaching.

First, Johnson (1992) mentioned the empiricist explanation which assumes that language learning is a mechanical process of habit formation resulting from behavioral and conditioned responses to the target language. In the second category, Johnson talked about the rationalist explanation which asserts that language learning is an innate ability that combines the intellectual understanding of language as an intricate system of grammatical structures with the desire to communicate within meaningful contexts. In the third, she described how communicative explanation places language learning in a social context of interaction in which the learner must become a participant in real-life contexts.

Freeman and Richards (1993), while interpreting teachers' teaching in the classroom based on their beliefs and knowledge, presented a concept of CLT (Communicative Language Teaching). This way of teaching is based on a set of carefully constructed assumptions which are logically extended from belief into classroom practice. CLT seeks to operationalize the theoretical concept of communicative competence throughout second language instruction from program and syllabus design to classroom materials and teaching techniques. This approach is derived from classroom discourse, pragmatics, and social interaction research.

4.4. Additional Discussion about Teacher's Knowledge and Beliefs

As an example of a unique case, the influence of teacher's knowledge and beliefs on classroom practice can be clearly seen in the situation of English language teaching in Korea, which shows how problematic it is when teachers don't have practical knowledge, let alone beliefs, about a certain way of teaching which is supposed to be applied in the classroom. Li's study (1998) illustrates really well the particular conditions of EFL education in Korea. Its overall point is about the difficulties in implementing CLT in the classroom. Li puts the difficulties reported by Korean teachers into four categories: those caused by the teachers, by the students, by the educational system, and

by CLT itself.

The first difficulty for Korean teachers is their deficiency in spoken English. Because they have been educated under form-based conditions, they have rarely had a chance to speak English and they also don't have confidence in speaking. The second difficulty is deficiency in strategic and sociolinguistic competence. This competence is supposed to be much greater in a communicative classroom than in a traditional grammar-focused classroom. It is hard for teachers having no experience of being in a real English environment to have the competence they need. The other difficulties are lack of training in CLT, few opportunities for retraining in CLT, misconceptions about CLT, and little time for and expertise in material development. The lack of knowledge and the absence of certain beliefs in teaching are significant obstacles in conceptualizing how to teach learners in a classroom.

5. Conclusions

It would be an appropriate expression that the classroom, especially the L2 classroom, is a melting pot where a variety of individual and cultural factors are blended to establish communication among teachers and learners, which leads to efficient L2 acquisition for the learners. Some of relatively representative factors were introduced here to rethink how they put impact on classroom practice pertinent to L2 acquisition. With all those factors, interaction occurs among students or between the teacher and students. As they negotiate and cooperate or collaborate, they go forward toward the goal, L2 acquisition.

In the process of this operation, above of all, the role of the teacher seems to be very significant. What the teacher does has a major influence in the classroom. What the teacher knows, and what the teacher believes become a power control over the classroom practices. How teachers interpret the situation in their classrooms is critical to effective ways of teaching. Teachers have prior experiences, personal values, and beliefs that inform their knowledge about teaching and

shape what they do in their classrooms. It is obvious to say that we have to be attentive to teacher's knowledge and beliefs if we think that teacher's knowledge and beliefs have a strong relationship with their lesson planning, instructional decisions, and classroom practices, all of which play a great role in leading learners to learning goals.

Even though the role of the teacher is huge, the practice in the classroom is not just done by the teacher alone. It should be remembered that the teacher is a necessary partner for the learners in the interaction to keep the conversation going and to keep the learning activity viable, and that the crucial role of the teacher is to coach the learners in their process of learning, thinking, listening, and speaking toward the ultimate goal: L2 acquisition.

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