

Classroom Activities in an EFL Context: A Case Study of NNS & NS Teachers

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Park, Punahm. 2005. Classroom Activities in an EFL Context: A Case Study NNS & NS Teachers. *The Linguistic Association of Korea Journal*, 13(2), 69-95. This article presents a case study of classroom activities of two NS and NNS teachers in the EFL context. In an attempt to characterize classroom activities for developing English oral skills, this study mainly examines the ways in which two EFL teachers arrange classroom activities and the degrees in which they influence students' language learning through classroom interaction. Classroom observation, field-notes, and interviews are employed to analyze how the teachers set up and accomplish the goals of the classroom activities. This study discusses the ways in which the teachers cater to the varied needs and previous knowledge of the students and thus expand the shared knowledge in a situational context. The findings of this study suggest that, for an effective language acquisition in classroom, EFL teachers need to enlarge the shared knowledge in an EFL situational context.

Key words: classroom activity, shared knowledge, classroom interaction, oral skill

1. Introduction

This study aims to investigate the interactions of teacher and learners in English as Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms and thereby identify a pedagogical means to make learners' language acquisition more successful and efficient. This research is predicated on the recent development in the field of Foreign Language Acquisition (FLA). Since the early 1980s, empirical and theoretical researches have been done on

the similarities and differences in FLA and Second Language Acquisition (SLA). What those researches have highlighted is, among many others, the difference of degrees in which learners are being exposed to the target language. Unlike second language learning, learners' exposure to the target language is minimal in foreign language settings. Therefore, classroom proves a vital place for FL students in developing their language skills. For FL learners, their learning can be intensified and consolidated primarily inside the classroom.

In FL settings, therefore, the educators are frequently asked to envision a classroom as the practical context for language acquisition. If a context is produced and shaped by participants in their language use, classroom is the context in which the students actualize language as a discourse and as a form of social practice (Kramsch, 1993, p. 46). A context is after all created in interaction partly on the basis of particular and individual choices by speakers at a local level (Ellis and Roberts, 1987, p. 20). Within the restricted context of classroom, therefore, the FL teacher needs to develop interactive environments and thus help the students collaboratively achieve the goal of acquiring the intended language skills.

Based on these sociocultural postulations, this study examines how classroom interactions are arranged and conducted among teachers and students in an EFL context. Within the perimeter of classroom, the success of language learning is dependent on the teacher-student interactions generated by classroom activities. Thus the primary object of analysis is to discover the actual process of interaction in which participants are engaged with the teacher and each other in the particular context. As a context-based classroom analysis, this study is concerned, as proposed by van Lier (1988, p. 2), not only with the context itself but with the ways and degrees of how the context influences on the interaction of participants. Such a context-based analysis of classroom will reveal at once the microcosmic aspects of language and the sociocultural world in which the learners are positioned.

This study will investigate how the teachers develop and arrange classroom activities which are socioculturally and interpersonally significant

to the participants. Classroom activities, I would argue, could and should serve for the learners as a more immediate context in which the use of language can be linked to its external worlds. For the analysis of classroom interactions in EFL context, this research takes up the cases of English conversation course taught respectively by a Native Speaking (NS) teacher and a Non-Native Speaking (NNS) teacher. In order to investigate classroom interaction of teacher and students, I'll start with the following two research questions: 1) what are the characteristics and features of successful and effective classes for students' learning in oral practice class?; and 2) will there be differences between NS and NNS teachers in using shared knowledge in a situational context of students' learning different cultures and languages?

2. Theoretical Background

The main premise of a sociocultural theory inspired by Vygotsky's ideas (1978, 1986) locates the source of learning in the pursuit of action, or rather mediated action, within our social worlds. With mediated action, we use linguistic and cultural tools and resources to make sense of our worlds. Such tools and resources are referred to as mediational means or, in Wertsch's words, the carriers of sociocultural patterns and knowledge" (1994, p. 204). Mediational means are related to what experts may employ in assisting less competent members for representing their involvement in the communicative activities. And it is our eventual internalization or self-regulation of the specific means that realize our activities in the world. Among many mediational means, language particularly becomes a primary vehicle for creating the human mind. We use language and symbols in the pursuit of action with others in our activities. As Vygotsky argues, we grow into the intellectual world of those around us (1978, p. 88).

Following Vygotsky's suggestion, Leontiev (1978, 1981) developed a theory of activity according to which activity is not defined merely as doing something, but rather as doing something that is motivated either by a biological need or a culturally constructed need.¹⁾ In other words,

the force of realizing motives is in specific actions stimulated by need. With goals and intentions in mind as motives, humans can perform actions under particular spatial and temporal *conditions* and through appropriate *mediational means* (Lantolf, 2000, p. 8). So Leontiev's activity can be discussed in three distinct levels: "motivation" is about why the activity is undertaken; "action" is about why participants behave the way they do; and "conditions" are concerned with how the activity is physically carried out under particular spatial and temporal situations. So activity can be directly observed by others at the level of conditions. And these levels do not exist on their own but reflect different levels of interaction. The motives and goals of particular activities also are not determined solely from the level of concrete doing.

Activity theory allows us to understand that the substance of learning is almost always conditioned by the processes of learning and more specifically by the processes of incorporating learners into the communicative activities of their learning environments. With the fairly conventionalized semiotic resources and patterns, communicative activities represent the process of language acquisition through a variety of practices (Hall, 1999) and thus demonstrate recurring classroom interactions. Through their extended participation in the classroom activities with other more experienced participants, such as their teachers, FL learners develop particular patterns of participation in their specific contexts. Kramsch (1993) also puts emphasis on the context of learning to the extent that the success of any communicative activity is heavily determined by the ways the participants perceive the context.

Many socioculturists such as Lantolf (1997), Donato (1994), Hall (1998), and van Lier (1996), have proved that activity theory with the main tenets of Vygotsky's theory can be applied to classroom language

1) Vygotsky takes a word as a unit of analysis of human action: meaning emerges from particular ways people deploy words in mediating their mental activity. In contrast, his emphasis on a word, however, is rejected by Leontiev on the ground that word-centered research is often too psychological and too far removed from the concrete activity of people in their world.

learning. In Vygotsky's idea, communicative development is linked to the opportunities for the learners to interact in their activities with others. The process takes place in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is characterized as "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). The specific means of assistance provided by the more capable members can take many forms, including "scaffolding. Donato portrays "scaffolded performance" as "a dialogically constituted interpsychological mechanism that promotes the novice's internalization of knowledge co-constructed on shared activity" (1994, p. 41). Seconding the main claims of Vygotsky, Hall puts more emphasis on the classroom activities through which structures of expectations within which their communicative values can be learned" (2002, p. 63). Hall suggests that classroom practices of various kinds of speech acts enable FL learners to figure out the different patterns between the target language and the native tongue (1999, p. 148). With particular practices in classroom, the learners become aware of the various linguistic and social consequences.

Learning and development, seen from the perspective of sociocultural theory, can emerge and take shape within the social, cultural, and historical contexts which position each individual onto meaningful and purposeful joint activities. A great majority of studies examining classroom-based learning from the sociocultural perspective provide compelling evidence for claims linking learning to teaching (Smagorinsky and Fly, 1993; Lantolf, 1997; Coughlan and Duff, 1994; Donato, 1994, 2000; Canagarajah, 1993; Boxer & Cortes-Conde, 2000; Hall, 1998, van Lier, 2000; Ohta, 2000). And those researches seem to justify the critical contention of this study that learning and teaching must be fully situated within a given context. In other words, we need to study the foreign language learning and teaching process as that which are situated in a particular social context

Coughlan and Duff (1994) report the ways that university-level L2

learners of Spanish demonstrate the fluid nature of cognitive activity while endeavoring to complete a classroom task. Conducted on the basis of activity theory, their research turns out a comparison-and-contrast study of two cases with the same task: one is from a Canadian context and the other is a larger scale study conducted in Hungary. With a comparative analysis of L2 discourse generated by a commonly employed picture description task, they demonstrate that the "same task" does not necessarily yield comparable results when performed by different individuals and even when performed by the same individual on two different occasions.

Smagorinsky and Fly (1993) examined large and small discussion groups in high school English language arts classrooms. They compared the norms and patterns of the discussions as realized by both large and small groups in each classroom. The students' linguistic actions in small group were found to reflect the values and processes that were evident in their teacher's actions of the larger group discussions. By explaining differences in instructional discourse patterns across classrooms, the research pointed out that teachers must make themselves available to their students in their interaction in order to help to shape individual development.

Lantolf (1997) suggests that language classrooms afford SL learners the opportunity to reflect on their communicative encounters and to experiment with different pragmatic options. Donato (2004) argues that situatedness of learning means that learning unfolds in different ways under different circumstances. The circumstances include specific individuals with different backgrounds, the signs they use, and the assistance they provide and are provided. That is, learners will become acculturated while participating in socio-cultural activities, (Vigotsky, 1978, 1986).

Canagarajah (1993) employed ethnographic methods to investigate students' attitudes towards learning English as they were reflected in their involvement in a university-level English classroom in Sri Lanka. He noticed that while they were resistant to the Americanized cultural discourse found in their textbooks, the learners were strongly motivated to learn English for socioeconomic advancement in their communities.

He concluded that a full understanding of what happens inside classroom requires a scrutiny of the sociopolitical forces with which students must contend outside the school. In the study of Boxer and Cortes-Conde (2000), teachers who were effective in stimulating students' involvement tended to follow up on students' contributions in such a way as to affirm their contributions and make them available to the full class for their consideration.

Vygotsky's ideas on the mediated mind and ZPD find another strong advocate in van Lier's work (2000). Under the banner of sociocultural theory and constructivist models of human activity, he develops an ecological perspective on language learning and teaching. He configures the ecological perspective, in a sociocultural impetus, as a call for re-conceptualization of learning as always contextualized. Therefore, his emphasis is laid not only on language and learner, but also on place, time, goals, and motives.

With the above-mentioned empirical studies, we may argue that the classroom interaction of teacher and students is situated in social and communicative activity. And the immediate context of classroom interaction always mediates, and at the same time, is mediated by the sociocultural forces surrounding the learners' daily lives. In other words, it is impossible to consider the process and outcomes of learning apart from their specific sociocultural contexts.

3. Method

This research on classroom activities from an interpretive and contextual point of view is not an experimental one. By adapting a sociocultural approach to SL/FL learning, this study takes as a starting point that classroom practices are situated in particular cultural environments (Breen, 1985; Kramsch, 1993). In a sense, the classroom may not be an efficient environment for its mastery, providing only limited opportunities for the learners in terms of so-called 'real world' communication. But, as Breen argues, the classroom has its own communicative potential. With its own authentic meta-communicative

purpose, the classroom can serve as a particular social context for the intensification of the cultural experience of learning (Breen, 1985, p. 154). I agree with Breen that language development can be intensified and consolidated inside the classroom with the teacher's assistance, though it may primarily occur outside of the artificial environment.

Based upon this assumption, this research tries to examine how the classroom may promote language development in foreign language settings where the learners do not get much of outside exposure to the target language. In an EFL context, I examined how the teacher and the students interact by observing two different activities of a NS teacher and a NNS teacher. In SLA, a case study is a genre to investigate not only learners' language learning but also teachers' teaching development context. A case study, according to Nunan, is defined as an "instance in action. In other words, one selects an instance from the class of objects and phenomena one is investigating"(1992, p. 75). Richards (1998) points out that a case study is useful precisely because it "can provide a rich source of teacher-generated information that is both descriptive and reflective" (1998, p. xii). As a program coordinator and teacher of the English conversation program, I have found many successful and effective classes that shed light on classroom learning and teaching in an EFL context to share with other teachers.

3.1. Research Questions

The sociocultural theory claims that learning and teaching must be fully situated within a given context. While exploring the participation of learners in sociocultural and communicative activities, an authentic research may shed light on how they become aware of the target culture and appropriate it by co-constructing shared knowledge in a given context. This study is conducted based on the following two research questions in an EFL context:

- 1) What are the characteristics and features of successful and effective

classes for students' learning in the oral practice class?

2) Will there be differences between NS and NNS teachers in using shared knowledge in the situational context of students' learning different cultures and languages?

The two research questions are based upon my experience of the research as an oral skill conversation teacher and program coordinator at the Language Education Center (hereafter, LEC) of a university. My experience at the LEC offers an opportunity for me to examine how teachers interact with students in making their classes effective for students' learning.

3.2. Setting

The LEC, as a kind of embedded program at a university, has a six-level English conversation program which lasts for a year, during which six sessions of different levels are held for 7 weeks. So the program requires students to study at least for a year to get a certificate. This study focused on lower level students of English conversation, which referred to students in level 1 and level 2 of the six-level English conversation program at the LEC. Each class had about 18-20 students. Although the students were beginners, most students were not without some basic knowledge of English. The knowledge that most students bring included knowing the basic phonics (International Phonetic Alphabet), the 6 wh-question words and advanced grammar. However they are not well versed in using them properly in their conversation. They have studied English grammar for at least 6 years during their middle and high schools, but they have had little chance to produce English orally. Therefore, these low level classes placed high emphasis on developing their ability to use what little English ability they may have confidently. Most students were, more than others, afraid of producing sentences even if they are familiar with the sentence structures.

In the classroom, students were seated in groups or in pairs to talk

to each other so that they might have many opportunities to talk. It is not a teacher-centered classroom setting. For the lower level, the teacher tried not to talk a lot, but rather engaged students to speak up. Teachers were frequently shuffled and shifted to different levels of classes so that students could have different teachers for each session. The classes with lower level students who just began learning English allowed this research to compare the interactions of NS teachers and NNS teachers in each classroom, because the LEC deployed both NS and NNS teachers to teach lower level classes.

3.3. Participants and Procedure

As the program coordinator of the English conversation program, I have occasionally observed all the classes of the teachers offered at the LEC. The purpose of my observations was to figure out the specialty or uniqueness of teaching styles and thus to arbitrate teachers' instructions for students in terms of teaching style and instructional materials. Between 2001 and 2002, I found out some patterns and characteristics shared by 'successful teachers' for the LEC English conversation class. After the informal observation, I launched my research with a plan for an in-depth analysis of classroom activities by successful language teachers at the LEC.

In particular, the two teachers enjoyed good reputation from students on their teaching methods, which had been ratified in course evaluations in 2003. Teacher A is a native English speaker from Canada with a master's degree in management business administration and had 2 years of teaching experience in Korea. The teacher had taught for six months at the LEC when this research started. Teacher B is a non-native speaker speaking English with an MA in English education. The teacher studied in the United States for 5 years and had 5 years of teaching experience while working at the LEC for the past three and a half years.²⁾

2) I would like to thank those two teachers and their students for allowing me to observe their classes for my research.

Before I started observing the classes of the two teachers, they had had success in students' course evaluations. Here the judging of successful teachers is based on not only the course evaluation but also students' comments on the classes of the four teachers. LEC students who take English conversation classes are asked to evaluate themselves, their course, and their instructor in the 6th week of each session (during a 7-week session) on the LEC website. The course evaluation consists of three parts: Student, Course, and Teacher.(See Appendix).³⁾ Their scores are much higher than those of the mean. However, the statistical evidence is not the main part of my research. The course evaluation is the starting point of this qualitative research. With the course evaluation of the two teachers from the students, I wanted to conduct an in-depth analysis of their classroom to determine if the statistical evaluation had the same result as the qualitative research. Without an in-depth analysis of each class, it would be difficult to confirm the success of each teacher.

The classroom activities of classes by the two teachers were documented by a camcorder and also by a voice-recorder for a session (7 weeks) in 2003. The analysis of classroom discourse and interview was chiefly based on the videotaped and audio-taped documents. I informed and received verbal permission from each teacher and their students about my visits and the procedure of documentation. I focused on the ways in which the teachers collaborate with the learners through their interaction in helping students' learning.

When I observed the two classes, I made field notes for each observation. The ideas on these notes were not structured but became very helpful in developing my arguments on the process of language teaching in general. Classroom activities were documented as they occurred in real time. Because one camcorder might fail to capture all of the activities and sounds, I also used a voice recorder as a way of recording the teachers' verbal expressions. The voice-recorded document allowed me to focus on how the teacher helped students in the

3) The result of course evaluation is not the main issue for my research, so I just place it in the appendix for a reference.

classroom through verbal (oral) interactions. For the analysis of interaction of teacher and students, I partly transcribed the observed classes with the help of two native speakers. After each observation, I interviewed the observed teacher to discuss what he or she did in the classroom.

4. Case studies

With the following case studies, this study investigates how two activities are carried out in actual classrooms and thereby examines how each context serves as an interactive force for the students to expedite the process of learning the target language. This research of pedagogical practices is supposed to enlighten the teaching of oral language skills. In the wake of such an investigation, this study substantiates a communicative and interactional approach to EFL learning from sociocultural perspectives.

4.1 Quiz Show

In a lower level English conversation course, the NS teacher asks students about what they want to learn. Some students state their immediate goal as learning how to make sentences by using complex grammatical forms. They are at the level of producing sentences by memorizing simple forms in drills. With this in mind, the teacher develops a quiz show activity in which students are engaged in asking questions by using the simple past form. This quiz show format is designed to help the students practice the past tense, without falling back upon the familiar drills of grammar pattern. After writing down several examples of interrogative sentence in the past tense on the whiteboard, the teacher explains briefly how to participate in the quiz show and puts students into groups 4 or 5. Each group is asked to create 10 questions on any given topic, and each of them must be in the past tense.

(1) Teacher's Pre-made Questions:

1. Where did *Park Chan Ho* first play in the major league?
2. Who starred in the movie *Shir?*
3. When did Brad Pitt marry Jennifer Aniston?
4. Why did *Choi Jin Sil* get a divorce?
5. How did Ben Jonson lose his gold medal in the 1988 Olympics?
6. When was World War I?
7. What was the name of the U.S president in 1995?

The teacher first indicates that the students may draw up their own questions based upon their own knowledge of facts and history. Instead of forcing them to produce questions only about English-related knowledge, he makes an effort to construct the class and questions relevant to their everyday life. During the group work, the teacher walks around the classroom as a way of helping individual groups that have difficulties in creating questions. After the work within individual groups, all students are called up as groups to join the competition of the quiz show. When each group takes a turn by posing a question, the rest of the class must compete for the right answer. A team will get a point for each correct answer. At the end of the class, the team with the lowest score will have to sing a song together in front of the entire class.

About 20 minutes are allotted for the individual groups to develop the questions by using the past tense. With the questions on hand, each group is invited to join the mock quiz show during which each group takes turns in asking questions. The students are very energized when they have a chance to pose a question, and become more animated to compete for the right answers to the questions by other groups. When a member of the group presents a correct answer, the entire group gets together in crying for joy. The atmosphere of the classroom is quite cheerful and dynamic. As if it is a real situation in which they do not want to lose, the students are actively and competitively engaged in the classroom activity and thereby render it a festive moment. The mock

quiz show activity has become quite surprisingly an exciting and productive classroom, with students making noises and working hard with their peers. The students do their best in contriving difficult questions and work vigorously within their group to come up with the right answers. Such a collaborative and competitive activity succeeds in creating a unique atmosphere of classroom which is quite different from what usually happens in other lower level classes. Here are some of the questions that the students created during the activity:

(2) Student-composed Questions:

8. When did Albert Einstein die?
9. What was the title of the movie about a mathematician, John Nash?
10. When did *Jun Bong Jun* (a famous Korean leader) die?
11. Who won the basketball MVP in 2004?
12. How long has *Donghak* Exercise been a country?
13. How long have sweet potatoes been in Korea?
14. How many titles have the *Kia Tigers* won in Korea?
15. Who created a conic?
16. When did drama M start?
17. When was Korea attacked by Japan?
18. How many mountains burned in North Korea? (How many times of wild fire happened yesterday in North Korea?)

The questions that the students develop with their teammates can be characterized as something that they draw from their previous experiences and situated knowledge. The result certainly endorses the rationale of this case study and confirms the notion of language learning which should be closely interconnected to the learners' very own experience in everyday life. As Vygotsky has persuasively argued (1978, 1986), ideas have social origins and thus are constructed through communication with others. In agreement with Vygotsky that an individual's cognitive system is a result of communication in social origins, I suggest that the students take advantage of their previous knowledge in learning the

target language by making the questions.

Motivated by the quiz show, the learners get immersed in inventing interrogative sentences and producing them through multiple interactions with other members of each group. As is shown in the student-made questions, 70% of those questions are closely related to their knowledge of Korean history and culture, as well as everyday life in Korea (10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18). Worth noting are questions 12 and 15. Question 15 is provided by a student majoring in mathematics. In the following excerpt, a student of a team ask the question "How long has *Donghak* exercise been a country?" The NS teacher doesn't catch the meaning of the sentence.

- (1) S1: How long has *Donghak* exercise been a country?
- (2) T: Country?
- (3) S2: Exercise?
- (4) S3: *Donghak* exercise?
- (5) S4: 110 years old.
- (6) T: Is that right? Ok, next question.

The question in line (1) does not make proper sense in English with the word "exercise" mistakenly used in place of "uprising". But such an error still does not pose a serious threat for the students in comprehending the meaning of the question, though the native English speaking teacher seems to have a little bit of difficulty understanding. "Exercise" and "uprising" are often interchangeable in Korean, which leads the Korean students to get confused about the distinctive words. After the class, the NS teacher admitted to the researcher that he did not get the meaning of the phrase on the spot and that he just skipped that part with no further inquiry.

In the interview with the researcher, the teacher defines the goal of the particular activity as follows: The purpose of the activity is to learn grammatical forms. With the immediate goal in mind, the teacher wants to discover better ways to engage students in natural communication for using specific grammatical forms. The lack of meager linguistic

resources in a beginner's class, however, does not make it any easier for him to reach this goal. The natural approach in foreign language teaching certainly paves the way for the students to talk about their own lives and concerns with which they are familiar. Logging on the situated and shared knowledge of the learners does allow the teacher to make natural communication possible and productive. The students use individual words whose meanings may emerge from the juxtaposition of their past uses with the locally situated uses of them in the present. When we think of the teaching of language, we must keep in mind that the words individual speakers may use have a life of their own.

4.2. Garage Sale

The following case is about a garage sale activity by a NNS English teacher who wants to develop a venue for the students to understand the cultural differences between Korea and North America. The immediate goal of the activity is to let the students learn how to negotiate by practicing some basic English expressions. The students were taught in the previous class about such expressions as *How much is it?*, *How much are they?*, *That's too expensive* and *Can you give me a discount?* Such expressions are frequently featured in English conversation textbooks. But they are not commonly used even in English speaking countries because most items in any grocery store are already labeled with a price tag or digitally coded with a fixed price. Those expressions are elementary in daily life. Students may have many opportunities to practice them in an English-speaking region, at a flea market or a garage sale. People usually make use of those expressions in those situations in order to get items at cheaper prices. Negotiating and haggling are certainly essential in those cases. So the teacher designed a garage sale as a way of providing the students with a natural environment to practice those expressions.

For the activity, the students were already asked to bring, at least, three used items and a certain amount of money for a real garage sale in the classroom. The class begins with a quick review of the

expressions for shopping. And the entire class alters the seats and tables to make the classroom a setting for a kind of garage sale. Once the students spread out their things on display, the teacher begins the activity. With the students now ready for the activity, the teacher demonstrates how to proceed by approaching one of the students and asking about her cap.

- (1) T: Good morning, guys.
- (2) SS: Good morning
- (3) T: Uhm,. ah, Su-kyung, I like your red cap. Is it new?
- (4) S: Yeah.
- (5) T: How much is it?
- (6) S: [*she is thinking about the price*] 2,000 won.
- (7) T: Are you sure? It's too cheap?
- (8) S: Oh, no, no. 20,000 won! Not cheap
- (7) T: Wow, it's really expensive. Where did you buy it?
- (8) S: Yeah, expensive. Hoo-moon.

The conversation shows how the teacher reminds the student of one of shopping expressions they studied in the previous class. Though the student does not make full sentences in her answers, she at least picks up a couple of words from the teacher's utterances. Her involvement in the interaction with the teacher, however limited, gives way to extending the dialogue. This short episode is good enough for the teacher to illustrate how the students can go on in the garage sale.

After the conversation with the student about a red cap, the teacher then distributes handouts for a garage sale with sample expressions for haggling. Before they can walk around the classroom to shop, the students are required to practice some model expressions on the handout in groups of pairs. The class is divided into pairs and students are asked to practice haggling and negotiating. This activity of practicing how to ask for and negotiate the prices of used items takes about 10 minutes. One student guesses the price of each item in her or his partner's possession. Students then take turns asking and answering

the questions to each other. After the 10-minute practice, the students are allowed to stand up and move around the classroom to buy and sell used items. The students instantly turn themselves into excited buyers and sellers by trying to negotiate and haggle, no matter how limited their language proficiency might be. During the activity, the students sometimes switch the codes between the two languages. For example, when they do not know how to express a sentence in English, they fall back on Korean expressions, which can be roughly translated as such: "I'll not take it because the stuff is not in good condition." When this happens, the teacher intervenes and suggests to the engaged students to try an expression in English they learned in class.

With the described activity of garage sale, the teacher establishes the goal of helping the students acquire the linguistic forms of negotiating in a natural communicative situation. With the cultural activity, the teacher offers the students an opportunity to have a simulative experience of American culture and thus recognize the cultural and social differences that they are not familiar with. The teacher spends some time before and after the activity in explaining the cultural significance of a garage or yard sale in North America. Primarily as a North American custom, garage sales are not what Koreans are likely to encounter in their daily lives. Many North Americans like to have garage or yard sales to get rid of their junk. Based on her own experience in the USA, the teacher also adds that similar kinds of sales can be held for charity or social fundraising in places such as a school ground or a stadium parking lot. Along with the replicated experience of garage sales, such a detailed explanation helps the students have a comparative sense of North American culture. Once the overall activity of a garage sale is finished, the teacher even urges her students to auction off the remaining things that are not yet sold. The auction gives a final touch to the exciting activity. The students are advised to use real money instead of any counterfeit money. With real money involved, the students can more actively participate in negotiating the price and getting good items at cheaper prices. Such a request energizes the students and thus contributes to rendering the entire

activity more realistic and more genuine. In doing so, the students lend themselves to practice, with more vigor, English expressions for shopping with which to negotiate the price of some items.

With an immediate goal of the class as the learning of particular linguistic expressions for shopping, the teacher has successfully developed a natural communicative environment with a real garage sale in the classroom. The students could maximize their interactions among themselves in a naturalized context. Within the limit of the classroom context, the teacher turns the activity into a here-and-now event of students' lives during which they buy used things in real Korean currency. In such a hilarious circumstance, the students do not feel much intimidated by their lack of language proficiency, but rather aggressively engage in the haggling and negotiating.

5. Findings

From the observation of NS and NNS teachers' classrooms, this study reveals how the above teachers set up the context of students' learning, what particular things they do for the activity and how they construct a learning environment. By utilizing the shared knowledge in the situational context, the teachers actively assisted the students learning. Cases (1) and (2) verify that the majority of the students seem to enjoy the chatty atmosphere and love to participate in a natural communicative situation. For the low level learners, the two teachers create a comfortable atmosphere in which the students may feel encouraged to talk with confidence and join in the activity freely. They feel free from making mistakes and do not worry about the correct usage of the words. Instead of trying to correct every grammatical mistake, the teachers let the students utilize the classroom activity as a lively prompt for open participation.

In Cases (1) and (2), we can see how the teachers set up the contexts of their activities with an easy going, conversational tone. Such an establishment of contexts allows them to map the contours of the lesson as follows: (A) Learning a language is best done through

familiar topics on which the learners talk as much as possible; (B) The purpose of the activity is to practice the language casually, which in turn helps the participants 'socialize' or get acquainted with other students in the class; (C) Though conversation should primarily be done in English, any variety of English inter-language may be tolerable inasmuch as the students can get encouraged in bringing out their opinions and ideas; and (D) The teachers do not insist on imitating British or American ways of speaking. Instead, the teachers permit the students to assume the same norms of interaction as in Korean settings outside the classroom.

The teachers of Cases (1) and (2) set up the class activities focusing on interactional and situational aspects of the context, not without narrowing them to the linguistic or cultural dimensions. This kind of approach results in making the students less dependent on the teachers. No linguistic restrictions are imposed on the context and students are encouraged to say whatever they wish. A potential drawback for these activities is in the fact that the teacher needs to perform almost encyclopedic feats of translating many unfamiliar items. In addition, since comprehensibility is predicated on the shared knowledge in the situational context, the activities enable the students to devise different ways for negotiating the complexities of meaning which may be caused due to ambiguous syntax, incomprehensible pronunciation, or even cultural misunderstandings. Especially in Case (2), the students tend to assume that the teacher would understand everything they say. In contrast, the NS teacher of Case (1) tries to draw the students previous knowledge. However, when the teacher faces something unexpected, he quickly drops it and switches to another one.

By articulating their own cultural and historical contexts, the students are engaged in shaping a context of communication where what one says is not really of any consequence. The foreign language classroom thus promotes cross-cultural interaction and opens new possibilities of understanding. In Case (1), we observe that the teacher provides grammatical guidelines within the natural communicative classroom environment and thus enables the students to put in practice the

previous knowledge. Case (2) features the teacher as providing a comparative momentum in which the students have firsthand experience of two different cultures. While using her own experience as a kind of scaffolding, the teacher transforms the classroom with excitement and spontaneity and thus helps the students practice the pre-learned expressions in their realistic situation and immediate context.

6. Conclusion and pedagogical implication

As Shulman (1992) puts it, a case is not just a report of an event or incident, but "it is a *case-of-something* and therefore merits more serious consideration than a simple anecdote or vignette. ... To call something a case is to treat it as a member of a class of events and to call our attention to its value in helping us appreciate more than the particularities of the case narratives itself" (1992, p. 21).

This case study of the two teachers' classrooms is based on genuine observations of actual classes conducted at the LEC. The purpose of this research is not to evaluate the pedagogical qualities of the teachers observed, but rather to examine the ways in which the teachers influence the students' learning with shared knowledge of the situational context at the LEC. The results confirmed that it is important for the students to acquire the target language during classroom activities through interactions between NNS and NS teachers. In addition, a collaborative interactions between EFL learners and teachers is essential to make their class effective and thus to extending the shared knowledge in their learning context.

The NS and NNS teachers played significant roles in assisting learners' language acquisition in the classroom, though there are substantial differences in approaches and attitudes among them. For instance, the NS teachers empower the students to use their previous knowledge in constructing the shared knowledge, whereas the NNS teachers take advantage of the shared knowledge in extending the dialogue and thus turning the learners into active participants. Such differences certainly point to a pedagogical implication in the EFL

context that teachers need to expand shared knowledge in the situational context to help students' language learning. By doing so, the educators can make a beneficial learning community in the learners' language development. In order to accelerate the process of acquiring the target language and culture within the boundary of the classroom, language teachers are expected to develop many creative activities and techniques with which to contextualize the learning process.

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Appendix: COURSE EVALUATION

Class Level:_____ Instructors:_____ Class Section:_____

This evaluation will be used to improve the quality of the courses offered by the Language Education Center. It will remain completely anonymous and will not affect your grade or relationship with the instructor in any way. Please do not write your name on this form.

Read each statement carefully, and express your level of agreement to each of the statements by circling one of the following numbers:

Strongly disagree ----- Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5

STUDENT

1. I attended thirty or more classes. (out of 35 total).
2. I came to class prepared and ready to participate -on a daily basis.
3. I participated in the class activities to the best of my ability.
4. If I need clarification or help, I approached the teacher.
5. I actively worked outside of class to improve my English skills.

COURSE

6. The textbook or materials were appropriate for the course.
7. Evaluation methods covered the stated objectives of the course.
8. This course provided lots of opportunities for me to improve my English.
9. I have generally enjoyed attending this class.
10. Activities helped improve the language skills targeted for this course.

TEACHER

11. The teacher clearly defined the objectives of this course.
 12. The teacher told students how they would be evaluated.
 13. The teacher's attitude towards the students was positive and encouraging.
 14. The teacher helped to facilitate a positive learning environment.
 15. The teacher used a variety of interesting materials and activities.
 16. The teacher tried to help students understand the best s/he could (materials or instructions).
 17. The teacher covered the class materials at an appropriate pace.
 18. The teacher gave students adequate time to express themselves.
 19. The teacher gave students opportunities to provide feedback (in class, after class, or during office hours).
 20. The teacher responded sincerely when students gave feedback.
-

The above twenty questions are composed to assess the following items: student's attendance and participation (#1-5); course, textbook, and classroom activities (#6-10); and teacher' teaching methods, feedback, and attitude (#11-20). A 5-point Likert scale, where 5 represented the positive end in the continuum of the responses (i.e., strongly agree) is converted into the percentage to compare with the mean. Table 1 shows the results of course evaluation of the teachers in the 4th session of 2003.

Table 1. Course Evaluation Result for 4th session of 2003

Teacher (Level)	Student		Course		Teacher	
	Mean	Score	Mean	Score	Mean	Score
A(2)	80.39	79.03	84.00	87.60	84.76	90.08
B(1)	77.03	82.67	84.29	90.29	90.51	96.43

For Teacher A, the scores are better than mean scores (Student: 80.39; Course: 79.03; and Teacher: 84.76) of Level 2. For teachers B, her

scores are better than mean scores (Student: 77.03; Course: 82.67; and Teacher: 90.51) of Level 1.

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Received: 30 Mar, 2005

Revised: 15 Jun, 2005

Accepted: 17 Jun, 2005