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Resumen

El propósito de este estudio de casos cualitativo fue describir y analizar cómo la interacción social en una aula de clases de segundas lenguas posiblemente proporciona oportunidades para que estudiantes de inglés como segunda lengua (ESL, por sus siglas en inglés) puedan desarrollar su producción oral y, por tanto, adquirir esa segunda lengua. Trece estudiantes de inglés como segunda lengua, y de diferentes lenguas maternas (L1), participaron en este estudio. Los datos fueron recogidos durante un semestre (catorce semanas) a través de una serie de observaciones y de toma de notas, a través de dos entrevistas semi-estructuradas y a través de grabaciones de audio y de vídeo de diversas formas de interacción en las clases. Los datos se codificaron y analizaron mediante el uso de un esquema diseñado por Gebhard (1985) y Schenkein (1985). Los resultados de este estudio mostraron que los patrones de interacción que surgieron en esta clase fueron: 1) exposición a una gran variedad de funciones del lenguaje, 2) participación en la negociación del significado y 3) participación en situaciones comunicativas. Los hallazgos sugieren que la participación de los estudiantes de ESL en una amplia variedad de tareas y actividades comunicativas dentro del aula de clases proporciona oportunidades para una mayor interacción y, por lo tanto, para desarrollar la producción oral entre los estudiantes.

Palabras clave Interacción, inglés como segunda lengua, negociación, producción oral

The role of interaction in the oral production of English-as-a-secondlanguage students: A qualitative case study

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to describe and analyze how social interaction in a second language classroom possibly provides opportunities for English-as-asecond-language (ESL) learners to develop their oral production and, therefore, acquire English. Thirteen ESL students from different first language (L1) backgrounds participated in this study. Data was collected during one semester (fourteen weeks) by doing a series of classrooms observations and taking notes, by conducting two semi-structured interviews, and by audio and video taping various forms of interaction in the classes. Data was coded and analyzed by using a scheme designed by Gebhard (1985) and Schenkein (1985). The results of this study showed that the patterns of interaction that emerged in this particular classroom setting were: 1) exposing to a variety of language functions, 2) engaging in negotiation for meaning, and 3) participating in communicative situations. The findings suggest that engaging ESL students in a wide variety of communicative tasks and activities within the classroom setting provides opportunities for more interaction and thus foster oral production among the students.

Key words Interaction, English as a second language, negotiation, oral production

1. Introduction

More than the last three decades much has been done to investigate and describe the second language classroom processes and the nature of teacher and student behaviors and interaction patterns in the classroom. Indeed, there now exists a recognizable, growing field of study in both education and language acquisition research, known as Classroom Centered Research (CCR).

Classroom Centered Research originated in the first language classroom. Its fundamental goal, according to Mehan (1979), is to describe and examine the social organization of interaction in the classroom. In the last several years, the researchers in the second language acquisition (SLA) field have begun to make use of CCR in second language acquisition research. As Gaies (1983a) points out, the emphasis of CCR in the second language classroom is on describing and analyzing, as fully as possible, what is going on in the second language instructional environment. The key terms in this type of research is description and analysis, and these are based primarily on the direct observation of classroom activities ands the way teacher and students and between students interact with each other.

So far, classroom centered research in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) has emphasized description of what goes on in second language classrooms with the objective of analyzing and learning more about the relationship between classroom interaction and second language acquisition. As Allwright (1983), Allwright and Bailey (1991), Bailey (1985), Chaudron (1988), and Gaies (1983a) point out in their review of CCR, much of the research has focused on patterns of participation in language classrooms, teachers' classroom behaviors, teacher treatment of students' errors, and more recently, social interaction as it relates to negotiation of meaning.

The present study is mostly concerned with this last area of CCR, that of social interaction. It is through social interaction between students and between students and teachers that meaning is negotiated (Ellis, 1985), and these meaning-negotiated exchanges are crucial for second language acquisition to take place (Gaies, 1983a). More specifically, this study is concerned with how interaction in the language classroom possibly provides opportunities for ESL students to acquire English.

1.1 The research questions

The primary purpose of this study was to describe and analyze the types of interaction in an ESL classroom, but not to test any hypothesis in order to prove any proposed theory in SLA. Therefore, the questions asked in this study are descriptive in nature. The main question that guided this study was:

What are the characteristics of interaction going on in an ESL classroom in an American Midwestern state university? In order to answer this question, the following sub-question was also asked:

a) What are the patterns of interaction that go on in an ESL classroom when the teacher developed teaching activities in this specific context?

Based on the description and analysis of the patterns of interaction going on in this ESL classroom, I will have a better understanding of the complexity of the relationship between interaction and second view

language acquisition.

2. Theoretical framework

According to Mehan (1979), what happens in classrooms is very complex. In his 1979 study, Mehan examined the social organization of interaction in an elementary school classroom across a school year. He described the structure of classroom lessons and the interaction activities of teachers and students that assembled lessons as socially organized events. The findings of the study showed that "interaction in the classroom does not occur in isolated acts of teacher and student talk. It occurs in connected discourse situated in a social context" (p. 181).

In second language classroom settings, interaction does not only happen between teachers and students, but between students and students as well. VanPatten and Benati (2010) define interaction as "conversations between learners and others" that might affect acquisition (p. 99). The studentstudent interaction is very important because during this kind of interaction students feel freer with one another to indicate noncomprehension and to negotiate for meaning. "Through interaction learners may be led to notice things they wouldn't notice otherwise, and this noticing can affect acquisition" (VanPatten & Benati, 2010, p. 99). The present study, as mentioned earlier, is interested in describing and analyzing social interaction in an ESL classroom. Therefore, the theoretical framework in this article will stress some second language acquisition studies as well as interactions in the L2 classroom.

In several of his studies, Long (1980, 1981a, 1983a) has supplemented the strict

view that comprehensible input leads to acquisition with the additional notion that native speakers' speech to nonnative speakers is most effective for second language acquisition when it contains modifications of interactional structure of conversation (Mackey, 2007). These interactive modifications are important for acquisition because they provide the best opportunities for the students to decompose the target language structures, to derive meaning from classroom events, to test out their hypotheses about the target language, and to exercise target language skills (Gass & Mackey, 2007; Ortega, 2009;). As a consequence of the recognition of the important role of interaction in SLA, in recent years many studies have been attributed to interactive features of classroom behaviors, such as modification of teachers' speech at the level of discourse, questioning and answering, and turn taking (Ellis, 1994).

One fundamental concern of some researchers and teachers in SLA is the differential allocation of teachers' speech to students in the classrooms (Mackey, 2007). Much evidence suggests that there is a mismatch between teachers' and students' culture norms, which results in a differential in teacher interaction with students in the classrooms (Chaudron, 1988). Laosa (1979) and Schinke-Llano (1983) have found that teachers in academically, socially, or ethnically heterogeneous classrooms usually have a negative attitude towards students who are perceived either as low achieving, as low socioeconomic status, or as belonging to a minority ethnic group. These researchers also found that some teachers have little patience when it comes to dealing with diverse students who don't do what they are supposed to be doing in class. Such negative behaviors often include the teacher addressing these students less, reacting less positively to their contributions, and giving them more criticism. Although the findings in these two studies may suggest that the students' low proficiency might be the reason that inhibited interaction, these findings do not establish that language proficiency is the only factor in differential occurrence of teacher-student interaction (Mackey, 2007). As a result of the differential allocation of teachers' speech addressed to students, some students will have less opportunities to be involved in the process of interaction and meaning-negotiation; thus they may not get sufficient comprehensible input to be able to proceed in their SLA processes (Ellis, 1985, 1994; Gass & Mackey, 2007; Krashen, 1985),

Other L2 studies have looked at the discourse of L2 classrooms with focus on the functions of teachers' questioning behavior. Brock (1986), Long (1981b), Long & Sato (1983), and White & Lightbown (1984) found that ESL teachers asked more display questions (questions which the teacher already knows the answer before asking) than referential questions (questions in which the answer is not known), whereas, outside the classrooms more referential questions are asked in native speaker-native speaker (NS-NS) and native speaker-nonnative speaker (NS-NNS) conversation. It has also been acknowledged that the ESL teachers modify the form and content of their questions in order to adapt to apparent difficulty or noncomprehension by the students, especially when different language functions are being presented and used by the teacher (Mackey & Goo, 2007). So far, we have been looking at the research on teacher-student interaction in second language classrooms. It has been

recognized that this type of interaction is crucial for students to obtain comprehensible input in order to proceed successfully in second language acquisition. However, it should also be noted that when students are engaged in the processes of classroom second language acquisition, they do not merely interact with their teachers; they interact with other students as well. Teachers are not the only source for them to obtain input for second language acquisition, as peer interlocutors may also have an effect on the SLA process (Mackey, 2007; Ortega, 2009).

In a large study, Porter (1983) examined the language produced by adult students in task-centered discussion done in pairs. The study compared NS-NNS talk with the talk in NNS-NNS conversation and looked for differences across students' proficiency levels. Porter found that although students cannot provide each other with the accurate grammatical and sociolinguistic input that NSs can, students are capable of offering each other genuine communicative practice, including the negotiating for meaning that is believed to aid SLA.

Varonis and Gass (1983, March) also conducted a study to investigate students' interaction in group work. In their study, they compared NNS-NNS conversation with the conversation in NS-NNS dyads and NS-NS dyads. They found that there was a greater frequency of negotiation sequences in nonnative dyads than in dyads involving native speakers. Nonnative speakers seemed to experience a greater degree of involvement in their negotiation for message meaning when they conversed with each other, as opposed to a native speaking interlocutor (Pasfield-Neofitou, 2012). They also found that in small groups, students negotiated more with other students who were at a different level of their target language proficiency, and more with students from different native language backgrounds. Based on these findings, Varonis and Gass argued for the value of nonnative conversation as a non-threatening context in which students feel freer with one another to indicate non-comprehension and negotiate for meaning.

Among many features displayed by small group work, increases in the amount and variety of language functions produced and the oral practice available through group work are probably two of the most attractive ones. In addition, it appears that in group work two-way tasks are more effective than one-way tasks in terms of helping students obtain comprehensible input. As some researchers (Gass & Mackey, 2007; Pica & Long, 1986) have argued, communication involving a two-way exchange of information would provide more comprehensible input than communication that does not. Two-way communication tasks should also promote acquisition better than one-way tasks, because in one-way communication the feedback from the listener that enables the speaker to adjust his/her speech is missing (Ellis, 2007); thus the kinds of modifications needed to make input comprehensible cannot be guaranteed (Mackey, 2007; Ortega, 2009). Overall, the research findings suggest that it is the combination of classroom work with two-way tasks that is especially beneficial to students in terms of the amount of talk produced, the amount of negotiation produced, and the amount of comprehensible input obtained (Ellis, 1985; Krashen, 1985; Ortega, 2009).

3. Methodology

In this section I present the research design, the research site, the participants, and the data collection and data analysis procedures.

The research design is an ethnographic case study (Merriam, 1988). Given the nature of the research questions that guided this investigation, this was an exploratory and descriptive study using the case study approach as the main research strategy from an ethnographic perspective (Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Stake, 1988). I believe that this kind of investigation yields insights about the interaction patterns in the ESL classroom and offers contributions to the knowledge base and practice of ESL education.

The site for this study was a single classroom in the Department of English as a Second Language (ESL) at a major American Midwestern state university. The ESL Department in this university is housed in the Department of Linguistics. Thirteen ESL students participated in this study. These thirteen students came from a variety of L1 backgrounds. There were students China, Japan, Pakistan, Taiwan, from Egypt, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Puerto Rico. All thirteen students enrolled in the fourteen-week spring semester Intensive English Program. The class to be studied was called English-Level V, the last level in the Program. This program is designed to provide language instruction and to help international students not admitted to the university because they lack survival skills as well as pre-academic skills. The overall objective of this program is to prepare students to live in the United States and to succeed in U.S. academic institutions.

Most of these students were planning to attend college in the United States upon the successful completion of their studies in the ESL Department.

Classes were held in the different buildings on the university campus, and each class period was fifty minutes every day, that is, fifty minutes a day each of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and grammar. Although the language modes were taught separately, the instructors in the department worked cooperatively to integrate activities using the four language modes in their individual classes.

As a researcher, I thought that one way to collect data on interaction happening in the classroom, which possibly provided opportunities for students to acquire English, was to focus a video camera and a tape recorder on interactions going on around those students who were making rapid progress and those who were not. I believed that by observing the class, by video/audio taping the classes, and by studying interaction that took place around a few students, I would be able to gain more insight about how opportunities were possibly provided through classroom interaction for second language acquisition to take place in this particular ESL context.

To carry out this project, I did a series of classroom observations. I observed the class two to three times a week for a period of twelve consecutive weeks during the spring 1996 semester. I began my classroom observations in the second week of classes, and concluded in the thirteenth week of the semester. In class, I took field notes with thorough description, emphasizing the different types of interaction going on in this ESL class. I jotted down ideas from

my observations and followed them up with two semi-structured interviews, both with the teacher and with the students. These interviews were conducted one at the beginning of the semester and one at the end of it. The purpose of the beginning-ofthe-semester interview was to get acquainted with all the participants, by asking them background educational and personal questions. The purpose of the end-ofthe-semester interview was to confirm the types of interaction I had observed during the semester and why these interactions had occurred. These interviews were taped on cassettes. I also wrote down aspects or issues that I noticed and wanted to get to eventually during the end-of-the-semester interview (Agar, 1980). I reviewed my field notes, and expanded them in computerized form. I reviewed my expanded field notes as frequently as I could to analyze and summarize pertinent elements. As patterns emerged, they shaped further development of my research questions. Although my observations and record keeping were filtered through my selective attention and bias, I provided, as far as possible, a detailed and careful description of everything that I observed and recorded, in the order in which it happened (Whitmore & Crowell, 1994).

Naturally occurring classroom activities were video and audio taped during the semester. The class was video and audio taped extensively through twelve of the fourteen-week program. Data was collected, focusing generally on all interaction going in the classroom. During the first week of class, I verbally introduced my project and gave students a printed handout identifying the purposes of the project. The students were asked to sign a release form (see Appendix

A) before the taping started. The taping started the second week of the semester. I, as the researcher, operated the video camera. The reason for me to participate in the camera operation was to get familiar with the class being studied and to get first-hand experience of using a video camera in an ESL classroom. Since the students did a lot of pair and group work in a big classroom, a small tape recorder was used together with the video camera to pick up conversations more clearly-conversations that might be inaudible on video. By the end of the twelveweek period of tape recording, the researcher collected about thirty-six hours of videotapes and twenty hours of audiotapes.

After I viewed the tapes extensively, segments of the tapes were selected, transcribed, and coded. In the process of the data screening, the segments that illustrate the characteristics and patterns of interactional behavior in the classroom activity were selected. As a researcher, I believed that it was not absolutely necessary to transcribe the entire data in order to describe the patterns of interaction since any piece of interaction would show the same pattern of interaction of the activities (McDermott & Roth, 1978).

In addition to the transcription of videotapes, the audiotapes —of the interviews and of the class discussions were also transcribed. When there were several voices speaking at the same time, only the most distinguished voice was picked up and transcribed. In the transcription, I consistently used a scheme with the features acquired from Gebhard (1985) and Schenkein (1985) to aid me in the study of what went on in the interaction (see Table 1 below). These same features were used for coding when doing the analysis.

Table 1

1. X	XXXX		 A five X indicates deletion of either students' names
			or/and identifying elements.
2. —			 Underlined words or parts of words indicate where
			emphatic stress is being placed by the speaker.
3.			 A period without parentheses means the speaker
			comes to a full stop, pitch falling at the end.
4.	,		 A comma indicates a pause, a drop in pitch, but
			voicing continues.
5.	[A left hand bracket indicates that two speakers are
	_		speaking simultaneously. It also shows that point of
			interruption of the incoming speaker.
6.	(.)		 Each period inside parentheses represents one
			second of silence.
7.	(())	 Items enclosed within double parentheses indicate
			transcriptionist's doubt if the content is accurate due
			to interference.
8.	()	 Items enclosed within single parentheses indicate
	-	-	non-verbal behaviors.

4. Results and discussion

In this section I will be presenting the results of this research and discussing how specific classroom activities and interactional arrangements provided opportunities for the students to acquire English. I will be doing this by presenting those patterns that emerged and that were more prominent in the class.

4.1 Exposing the students to a variety of language functions

In this class, the students were exposed to a variety of language functions. There seems to be two ways that helped the students to get more exposure to a variety of language functions. One was through their textbook, and the other was through interacting with the teacher and their classmates.

The students in the class used the textbook called *Refining Composition Skills*. This book, using a communicative approach, introduces the language needed to communicate in a variety of language situations and using the four language modes. In the book, language is always presented in context. When the students used this book in the class, they had opportunities to be exposed to a variety of language functions (asking and giving directions/information, introducing oneself, making requests, among others). The students also read a wide range of texts in the book. These texts are based on the kinds of reading materials that people read every day: letters, application forms, ads, newspaper articles, and so on. When I asked the teacher why she was using those specific reading materials she had selected, she said: "The content of the materials in the book covers many different topics and they often involve personal and social themes that, in turn, offer the students an excellent and rich source of language input (Krashen, 1985;

Pasfield-Neofitou, 2012). Another way that seemed to have helped the students get more exposure to a variety of language and of language functions was through interacting with the teacher and their classmates (Chaudron, 1988; Ellis, 1985, 1994, 2007; Laosa, 1979; Mackey & Goo, 2007; Schinke-Llano, 1983). For example, one day, when the teacher was lecturing in the class, she talked about what the students should do about their language study. I followed up this issue with the teacher. She said that she did this "because she was not quite satisfied with some of the students' work and she wanted to give them a push." Let's have a look at Scene 1:

Scene 1

1.1	T:	Now, for the next three weeks you're
1.2		going to work very, very hard. No breaks.
1.3		You got it?
1.4	S1:	We didn't have break?
1.5.	T:	Yes, I know. Some of you, not all of you, not all of you.
1.6		Some of you are very lazy. Some of you are going
1.7		to have a lot of trouble later.
1.8		And I don't want that to happen.
1.9		So, my job is to make you work harder and harder. OK?

1.10		Some of you are going to work harder.
1.11		XXXXX is going to work especially harder.
1.12		I am making her the leader.
1.13		She's going to do the work everybody else does.
1.14		I know you're not doing your homework.
1.15	S2:	Me, yes.
1.16	T:	OK, so, some of you, I am going to push
1.17		a little harder. Some of you want to be pushed.
1.18		Some of you are doing a wonderful job.
1.19		Some of you are a little tired, sleeping in classes. I can't accept this anymore

By looking at some of the examples of the interaction happening in teacher lecturing as shown in Scene 1, it was quite evident that the teacher was angry or at least dissatisfied with some of the students in that class or did not have enough patience with some of them (Laosa, 1979; Schinke-Llano, 1983).

4.2 Engaging in negotiation for meaning

When the students did not get opportunities to speak English in a teacher lecturing, for example, they were provided with opportunities to obtain some language input, which is crucial for SLA (Ellis, 1985, 1994, 2007; Krashen, 1985), through teacher-led questions, through the reading material from the book, and through student-student small conversations based on the lecture. Opportunities were also provided for the students to acquire English through their participation in a wide possible range of communicative tasks and real communications in many activities, such as doing exercises in the textbook, talking between teacher and students, having whole-class activities, and discussing either in pairs or in small groups. In this type of participation, the students negotiated meaning in order to understand what was going on in the class.

Scene 2 shows what happened when the students did one exercise from the textbook.

Scene 2

S1:	I study in the Intensive English Program.
S2:	All right, you're student. How do you get to work?
S1:	To work?
S2:	How to get to work?
S1:	To study, because I study.
	OK. First you ask me ''what do you do'' I say
	"I study in the Intensive English Program."
	Then you ask me "How to get to work?"
S2:	No, how do you get to
	[
S1:	I study, I am not work.
	S2: S1: S2: S1: S2:

2.11		I don't work.
2.12	S2:	Right. How do you get to study?
2.13	S1:	I, I walk.
2.14	S2:	Oh, no, how do you get to school?

Since the dialogue was only partially guided, the two students needed to use their personal information to fill in the missing part-they were negotiating meaning to understand each other (Mackey, 2007; Ortega, 2009). I asked these two particular students what had happened during their conversation. They said that it was hard for the two of them to follow each other while having this exchange. Student 1 specifically told me that he had "to listen carefully to his partner and try to understand him in order to make their conversation work." He added that he had "to make an effort to carry on with the dialogue because he did not know what the other student was asking and why". However, this type of exercise set up opportunities for the students to acquire English because the communicative

tasks set in the exercise provided practice that combined both forms and meaning of language together, although there were some chunks of language that were at all grammatically correct or appropriate to ask (Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Ellis, 2007).

3) Participating in real communicative situations.

The talk between the teacher and the students also offered chances for the students to participate in real communicative situations (Chaudron, 1988; Ellis, 2007; Pica & Long, 1986). For instance, two students wanted to go to Florida during spring break, but they did not know what would be the cheapest way to get there. So, they talked with the teacher to get the information they wanted. Let's have a look at Scene 3.

Scene 3

3.1	T:	To Florida?
3.2	S1:	Yeah.
3.3	T:	By airplane? Well. I don't know, but
3.4		I think it's about \$300 round trip.
3.5		Maybe cheaper, that's probably right. You can
3.6		find cheaper flights, but it's around \$300.
3.7	S2	By bus?
3.8	T:	No, by plane.
3.9	S2:	And by bus is?
		[
3.10	T:	You know it's the cheapest way
3.11		(makes a sign of hitch hiking).
3.12	S2:	Is it dangerous?

During the conversation presented above, the teacher and the students both took a very active part and asked each other many referential questions (Brock, 1986; Long, 1981b; Long & Sato, 1983; White & Lightbown, 1984). The questions asked by the students were very pertinent since they were interested in going on a trip, but did not know the best way to get to their desired destination. I asked S2 if she had understood what the teacher was explaining about how to get to Florida and the fares, she said that she "thought she had understood", but then she realized she "was a bit confused whether the teacher was referring to traveling by plane or by bus." In this episode, however, the teacher and the students were participating in a real communicative exchange, and they were not doing any sort of pre-fabricated grammar exercises or practice from the book. These real life question-answer exchanges between the teacher and the students and between students are a clear and valid source of input for ESL students in a classroom setting (Ellis, 1994, 2007; Gass & Mackey, 2007; White & Lightbown, 1984).

5. Conclusions

In this class, several opportunities for students to acquire English were provided through the following activities: doing exercises in the textbook, talking between teacher and students, and talking between students. After analyzing the data, the main patterns of interaction that emerged in this particular classroom setting were: 1) exposing the students to a variety of language functions, 2) engaging in negotiation for meaning, and 3) participating in real communicative situations.

Exposure to a variety of language functions was one factor that helped to provide opportunities for SLA (Mackey & Goo, 2007). It is true that the interaction that took place during teacher lecturing, for example, did not provide the students with many chances to practice their English. However, it is important to realize that when interaction sets up opportunities for SLA, it may also limit SLA in some other ways or vice versa (Long, 1980, 1981a, 1983a; VanPatten & Benati, 2010). The interaction that went on during teacher lecturing gave the students chances to experience the way English was used to express one's legitimate anger or dissatisfaction. This actually set up opportunities for the students to be exposed to different language functions which they might not get access to from just studying their textbooks. By being exposed to a variety of language functions, the students in this class were able to obtain a lot of language input, which is considered to be a minimum requirement for SLA (Chaudron, 1988; Ellis, 1985, 1994, 2007; Gass & Mackey, 2007; Krashen, 1985).

Engaging in negotiation for meaning participating in communicative and situations also provided opportunities for the students to acquire English (Allwright, 1983; Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Bailey, 1985; Chaudron, 1988; Gaies, 1983a; Ortega, 2009). In order to reach understanding, the students had to pay attention to the conversation, and when there was comprehension failure, they had to work with their peer(s) to negotiate the meaning (Ellis, 1985, 1994, 2007). Negotiation episodes, such as the one in Scene 2, contain "clarification questions or comprehension checks if non-understanding is serious, if the interlocutor is somewhat unsure he/she has understood the message correctly, or if one interlocutor suspects the other speaker may not have understood what has been said" (Ortega, 2009, p. 61). The use of different interactional modifications in negotiation for meaning (Ellis, 1994; Gebhard, 1985; Long, 1980) would help to prevent noncomprehension in communication and to make input comprehensible (Krashen, 1985; Long, 1980, 1981a, 1983a).

Participating in communicative situations helped the students with their second language acquisition because there seems to be always an information gap in real communicative situations (Allwright, 1983; Allwright & Bailey, 1991). In order to fill in the information gap, the students have to talk, to negotiate, and to understand each other. Therefore, they get more speaking opportunities, and more chances to test their hypotheses about new language (Pasfield-Neofitou, 2012; Pica & Long, 1986). The topics used in some of the conversations, like the one presented in Scene 2, not only interested the students but also created genuine communicative situations for them. Another reason when participating in communicative situations is that the students focus more on meaning rather than on grammatical forms (Allwright & Bailey, 1991). In short, participating in communicative situations allows the students to learn English in a more natural way, makes the classroom experience more student-centered, and ensures a high degree of learner involvement (Pasfield-Neofitou, 2012). Participating in a wide possible range of communicative tasks and communicative situations in the classroom activities (Allwright, 1983; Allwright & Bailey, 1991), the students also has a lot of chances to speak English and to fully use the language input they had (Gass & Mackey, 2007; Krashen, 1985). Finally, the different communicative activities promoted by the teacher also gave the students more oral production opportunities as they were engaged in the interaction among them.

The purpose of looking at how opportunities were possibly provided for SLA through classroom interaction in this study was neither looking for any definite causal relationships between classroom interaction and SLA, nor drawing any final conclusions about classroom SLA (Gaies, 1983a). I believe that more descriptions and explorations about what goes on in second language classrooms are needed before we can make firm claims about the relationship between L2 classrooms teaching and SLA.

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Appendix A

Sample Release Form

I understand that the information obtained from the interviews, from the audiotapes and from the videotapes of the different class activities will only be used for research purposes to increase the knowledge of human behavior and people's understanding of themselves while interacting with each other in an ESL context. All identifying information will be disguised so that my participation will be confidential.

I have read and understood the above information and agree to participate in the study.

Name and last name (printed)

Signature

Date

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